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No. 159.

## GOING HOME.

BY EREN B. REKPOD.

Mourners, weeping o'er the coffin  
Of a man with silvered hair,  
Did you see his spirit climbing  
Up the angels' stair?  
Did you hear them when they called him,  
"Pilgrim, come. No longer roam!"  
Ah! he cares not for your weeping;  
He has found a welcome home.

Mother, sobbing o'er the cradle  
Where your little child has laid,  
Dream you of the transformation  
That the change of death has made?  
Think! Your child had only started  
In the path hedged round by sin,  
When the gates of Heaven swung open,  
And your darling entered in.

Wife, beside the low grave kneeling,  
Where they hid from mortal sight  
Him you loved so much—oh, tell me,  
Do you see no gleam of light?  
Waits your loved one o'er the river,  
On the ferry's further shore,  
Till the grim and silent boatman  
Come to row your spirit o'er.

Children, lonesome for the sunshine  
Of a sweet-voiced mother's smile,  
She has crossed the hills before you;  
Travel on a little while,  
Soon for you the gates of sunset  
Will, at day's decline, unfold,  
And you'll find, beyond the portals,  
Strangely sweet and deep repose.

Maiden, is your pathway shadowed?  
Do you miss a tender voice,  
And the sound of many footsteps,  
That could make your heart rejoice?  
Think! the path of peace, mending,  
Is before your loved one's feet,  
And he waits to bid you welcome  
When you reach the golden street.

When we see our loved ones going,  
How our bitter tears drop fall,  
And we vainly would keep them longer,  
Though they hear the angels' call.  
Kiss their lips in tears of parting,  
When the angels whisper, "Come,"  
And remember, oh, remember,  
They are only going home!

## Barbara's Fate:

OR,  
A BRIDE, BUT NOT A WIFE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,  
AUTHOR OF "LOVE BLIND," "OATH BOUND," ETC.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE CURSE.

HALF-WAY between New York and the busy, pretty city of Paterson, New Jersey, stands a house, at once conspicuous to travelers on the Erie railroad, for its beauty as well as isolation of situation, no less than its elegance of design and finish, and the peculiarly romantic appearance it bears.

From the line of the railroad, and perhaps ten feet below that level, from which rude wooden steps lead down, stretches an immense park, traversed by curving drives, tree-shaded promenades, and open, sunny lawns.

A lake, of circular form and rather diminutive size, adorns the center of the park, from which narrow walks diverge toward the railroad—the carriage entrance—where a large iron gate stands hospitably open, and a tiny porter's lodge adds to the style of the grounds; and the dwelling itself—Chetwynd Chase.

At the first glance bestowed upon the fair gray granite pillars and towers of far-famed Chetwynd Chase, even the most superficial observer is impressed with the mingled beauty and weirdness, fairy grace, and somber aspect of its external appearance.

Standing upon a slight eminence, with a dense grove for a background, its tall turrets rearing above the highest tree-tops with the sloping grass-sown banks of the Passaic river stretching from the high flight of griffin-guarded steps down to the very brink of the river, that at that spot widens and curves into unusual beauty, Chetwynd Chase is exceedingly fair to look upon, even while among its own admirers it has won the name of the "Mysterious."

And there was a mystery, a deep and unfathomable mystery, that for more than two centuries defied investigation, that in later days—our own times—deepened from a mystery to a fearful curse; an anathema on one of the houses of Chetwynd that was well calculated to cast dismal gloom on the unfortunate family.

But the Chetwynds of Chetwynd Chase, who had come to Old England, with William the Conqueror, and lived in almost royalty in their old baronial castle in Gloucestershire, and whose younger son, Rexton Chetwynd, had come to America twenty years before the present time—for our story is one of to-day, in a year we have lately seen (1869)—had ever borne with them, wherever they lived, the same strange mystery, that even invested their homes with its sepulchral glare.

Rexton Chetwynd, who had taken for his home this grand old place, and christened it in true old English style, was one of those fine, courtly gentlemen who are fitted by birth, education and inclination, to fill the highest positions of honor and trust. He was remarkably handsome—but the Chetwynds were a splendid race—peerless beauty being one of the clauses sworn to in that old, old curse; of about the average height, possibly a trifle above, with erect, kindly bearing, bright, intense eyes of jet-black, over which hung great, bushy eyebrows of purest white, that matched for hue and massiveness his hair and military beard.

Such was Rexton Chetwynd, in his fifty-seventh year. The family of Chetwynd Chase was not large, exclusive of the corps of servants.

Mrs. Chetwynd, a quietly, quiet elderly lady, who had been pretty in her fresher days, and now was just as charming in manner and temperament as ever she had been; a true wife, who believed her husband the most perfect man on all the earth, whose will was her rigid law, whose faintest expressed desire was her greatest pleasure to perform. She never presumed to contradict him in the slightest matter; such a wild idea had never entered her head;



It was not a long walk, and in a few minutes Barbara reached the ruins.

and, yielding her graceful, tender, dignified homage, she freely personated what we seldom see—a true, model wife; and perhaps more women would gladly follow her example, were the husbands to imitate Rexton Chetwynd in his chivalrous devotion and affectionate solicitude for her welfare and happiness.

There was a nephew traveling on the continent now, a handsome, high-spirited gentleman, with the Chetwynds' bold beauty and *hauteur*, and winning tenderness of mien.

Rex Chetwynd was deeply attached to his uncle and aunt, but on his only cousin, the darling of Chetwynd Chase, his heart was set with strongest affection.

Blanche Chetwynd was a girl whom to see was to instantly admire; to know, to steadily love. Her charms of mind were no less than her graces of person, that were made up of a rare and beautiful commingling of style.

In stature she was less tall than most girls at her age—she was nineteen. Her eyes, jetty black like her father's, had in them a soft, pleading expression, that lessened greatly her likeness to Mr. Chetwynd. Her hair was like her mother's had been, bright, burnished gold in color, with not a ripple to mar the shining glory, save at the ends, which curled in loose, thick rings.

Her complexion was pale as marble, without the faintest vestige of color on her cheeks, and yet there was not a suggestion of pallid sickness in that sunny whiteness.

Her lips were proudly arched and of vivid scarlet, ripe and dewy, suggesting all manner of pretty similes—strawberries, gleaming ivy-berry, cleft pomegranates.

Blanche Chetwynd it was, this regal, peerless girl, on whom the curse would descend; to whom the mystery would be unraveled, which for two hundred years had been wrapt in densest gloom, and had been declared never to be explained until the youngest son of the house of Chetwynd could possess, in their youngest born, a daughter.

Heretofore, the youngest child had invariably been a son; and until Rexton Chetwynd had seen his fair Blanche grow up, year after year, and no other children following, he had not dreamed that on him and his the curse would fall.

But Blanche was nineteen now, and Mr. Chetwynd had long since given up hoping for another son, whose birth would thus avert the cloud from Blanche's head; and for years back he had been steeling himself for the blow he knew must come, sooner or later; but of its import, or coming, he was perfectly ignorant. He only knew, as Blanche herself knew, and all the Chetwynds, that, because from a youngest daughter the blight had proceeded, so to a youngest daughter it must return.

Rexton Chetwynd knew there was something

awful about it; he had heard his grandfather tell about the "Scarlet Room" in the old baronial castle, where walls were encrimsoned with the blood of young Lady Constanza, whose pitiful story, whose tragic end, was well known to the family. He had heard of her ghost wandering through the halls, and of a dark, malignantly beautiful face that followed the figure—that of Reginald Lenox, the seducer, the murderer of young Constanza.

It had been handed down, this weird legend, from father to son, with the accompanying curse on the youngest daughter, who alone by a peculiar sacrifice could wipe out the stain of the Chetwynd horror.

And so Blanche, fair, beautiful Blanche, hundreds of miles from that old castle, in a land where legends and superstition go for what they are worth, was going on and on, to fight it out for Lady Constanza's sake.

### CHAPTER II.

#### BARBARA'S LOVE.

In one of the most luxuriously-appointed apartments of Chetwynd Chase, whose high, wide windows commanded far-reaching views over hills and meadows, a young girl was sitting, her fair, round arms folded on the window-ledge, her wondrously-splendid face set sternly toward the sunset sky, whose vivid hues were reflected in deliciously faint tints on her brunette complexion.

No one could have caught even the slightest glimpse of Barbara Lester's rare, strangely beautiful face, without involuntarily uttering an exclamation of surprise and admiration.

It was a face that suggested the thought of a sudden, piercing rift of light over a thunder-charged storm-cloud, or a bright, dead-cold moonbeam shining down over a yawning, black fissure. A magnificent face, that exactly depicted the triumph of pride over despair; that denoted a will strong enough to move mountains, were they in her way.

The eyes were slumberous, and generally veiled by the long thick lashes—eyes that looked as Barbara Lester willed they should look, that even Rexton Chetwynd, Sr., found a match for his own sun-bright ones.

Her mouth was perfect; not very small, but arched like a Cupid's bow; full of witching tenderness and womanliness, whether the red lips were parted in a dazzling, pearl-displaying smile, or gravely closed in demure silence.

This afternoon—a chill, sunny afternoon in late October—Barbara Lester had excused herself from the music-room, where Blanche Chetwynd was practicing; she had been in a state of unrest all the day, and now, as she looked her door, and almost flung herself into a chair by the open window, a sigh of relief came from her lips, a light to her eyes that was not all

gladness, and a curl to her lips that was all contentment.

"How thoroughly sick of it all I am!" she said, as she leaned her head on her hand—so that the long brown tresses covered neck and arms.

"Thoroughly tired of it all, because it is *charity*, from my kingly Mr. Chetwynd down to baby Blanche—ah! baby though she is, she may yet thwart me! but *re* she does!"

Then a sudden, delightful memory seemed to return to her.

"How ridiculous I am! as if, *now*, she, or mortal woman, has it in her power to win him from me! Let them boast their kindness to poor Barbara Lester, the child who was left at their door, seventeen years ago; let them, I say, and I'd tell them to their faces that Barbara Lester's beauty will balance their money, any day!"

A gleam of gratified triumph lighted her eyes as she glanced backward into the pier glass.

"If Blanche is pretty, I am handsome; if she is beautiful, I am more so. And to think she should dream, for a moment, that her childish airs and graces could win Gervaise De Laurian from me!"

The name of her lover came in dulcet strains from her lips; came in a low, sweet key that sent the warm blood to her forehead, and a gladness light to her eyes.

"Gervaise, dearest one! truly, Destiny has been good to me in leading you to me."

Her musing, dreamy voice died away in a meditative murmur as she bowed her regal head still lower on her hand, gazing earnestly at a picture painted on porcelain that hung, by a silver hook, beside the window.

She removed it, and looked more closely at it.

It was a face, a head, that would have made any woman's heart beat the quicker at the thought of being beloved by the original.

Boldly handsome, intelligent, refined, with a dash of imperiousness, pride and willfulness in the finely-cut features. A blonde complexion shadowed by a heavy amber mustache; a pair of keen, almost fierce violet eyes; dark gold hair, tawny in hue, rare in its beauty, that was brushed low over the forehead, and off the temples, in a style that plainly told the carelessness of the wearer to its arrangement, as well as a proud consciousness of its extreme becomingness. Such was the face, so fascinating in its half-smiling, half-frowning pride, upon which Barbara Lester lavished such hot, ceaseless kisses.

Then she replaced the picture on its silver hook, but not before removing from its frame a heavy, plain gold ring, that she placed on her tiny finger.

"Blanche has never seen that, and little dreams she I am his betrothed bride. If she

did, I think she would take better care that she did not flush and tremble so if he but chanced to touch her hand."

She had thrown a black lace shawl over her shoulders while she spoke, and then adjusted a tiny hat, on whose side glowed a spray of velvet pinks.

"I think I will do. Gervaise requested me to wear this suit, although it is a strange color for to-day."

"She glanced down at her emerald green silk. 'It means 'forsaken'; is it an omen, I wonder?'"

Then, smiling at her nervous suggestion, she looked at her watch.

"Five o'clock so soon! and I promised to be at the chapel ruins at five."

With a hurried glance at the window, she swept across the velvet carpet, opened the door, then locked it after her.

Blanche Chetwynd met her at the gate, her sunbright curls all windblown about her fresh, fair face, her black eyes full of unspoken happiness.

"Off for a ramble, Barbara?"

Barbara laughed, as she hoisted her parasol.

"To Passaic, I think, if the road is not too dusty. I may be late to dinner, but you'll make my excuses?"

"Assuredly. But there is the carriage, Barbara."

"Thanks; but a walk will be a delightful rarity."

"I think you'll meet Mr. De Laurian, Barbara, for I passed him at the chapel ruins a few minutes ago."

Barbara glanced keenly at the sweet, conscious face, and then a little look of stern reproach came to her lips.

"Mr. De Laurian and you often meet, Blanche."

Her words were intended as a probe to the young girl's heart, and Barbara exultantly saw the glow deepen on her cheeks.

"You are an adept, Blanche," and Barbara laid her finger on the girl's hot face.

"But, *adieu, mia cara*," and, waiting a kiss, she went on, and Blanche returned slowly to the Chase.

It was not a long walk, and in a few minutes Barbara reached the ruins.

True to his tryst, Gervaise De Laurian awaited her. With a glad smile, in which all her beauty seemed to concentrate itself, she extended her hands.

"Gervaise! I was fearful I had kept you waiting too long!"

"As if forever were too long to wait for you, Barbara!"

His deep-whispered words sent a flush to her cheeks.

"But, nevertheless, I'm glad you've come; I am impatient, after all, for the treasure the next hour will give me. My darling, you do not desire to retract your promise? you are as willing to-day to register your vow as you were when I gave you that?"

His finger touched the golden circlet on her hand, and his proud, passionate eyes were looking down in her own.

Retreat, Gervaise? Never! Rather do I desire to strengthen it by every bond I may."

He smiled, then bent and kissed her.

"Come, then, my darling. Everything is in readiness; a short five minutes, and we will be each other's forever."

"But, Blanche Chetwynd?"

For the life of her, Barbara could not tell why she asked that. She never knew, until months after, why it was that the words rose spontaneously to her lips, forcing their own utterance; or why, for a second, there arose before her a sweet, girlish face, with love-lighted eyes.

For a moment Gervaise De Laurian looked at her; then his eyes grew wrathful.

"What has Blanche Chetwynd to do with me, or you?"

"Forgive me, Gervaise; they were idle words."

It was wonderful, almost pitiful, to see how this proud, eagle-hearted girl flung all her pride, her *hauteur* at the feet of her love; but Barbara Lester's was no light, passing emotion, that scarce ruffled the tide of her life. It was a mighty, master current, that bowed all her will to its headlong course.

And Gervaise De Laurian knew this. He knew how entirely he was her master, and he was proud of his conquest, so that now, when he listened to her loving voice and saw her beautiful, graceful girlishness, he smiled down in her wistful eyes.

"I will forgive you. But I can not have you speak so again."

She accepted his arm, and together they walked slowly to the inner chamber of the chapel ruins.

"Now, Barbara, my own, here we begin to tread the same life path. Here I shall solemnly swear to love you to the end. Barbara, you will promise to love me, care for me with all your woman's heart, forever and forever?"

His low, murmurous voice held her in a thrall, delicious as magical.

"Forever and ever, Gervaise, till death do us part."

He kissed her, and led her through the moss-grown door.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "IF SHE BUT KNEW!"

It was a spacious place, with old, moth-eaten drapery, and a floor where luxuriant grass grew between the interstices of moldy stones.

At one end, it was inclosed by a hedge of pines, at the other the Passaic river flowed. Above waved tree-tops, a low, tender music lingering in their branches.

An elderly gentleman, with pleasant blue eyes, awaited them.

"Barbara, dear, this is a friend of mine from New York, who is empowered by the right of his office to marry. He is not a clergyman, but you do not object to being married by a justice of the peace?"

Barbara did not care. Why should she?

was not her marriage just as sacred solemnized thus?

With luminous eyes she told her lover so, and he turned to the gentleman.

"Mr. Croyle, this is the lady of whom I spoke, Miss Leslie. We are ready now."

Hand in hand, under the roofing of Nature's Eternal Temple, with the grand forest aisles about them, and the music of the soft summer winds their wedding hymn, the ceremony was spoken; Gervaise De Laurian had kissed his bride; the officiating gentleman had departed.

"Mrs. Gervaise De Laurian, my wife! my own beautiful bride!"

He whispered the words in her ear as they turned to retrace their steps.

A smile of perfect happiness answered him.

"I am glad it is over, Barbara. I have sometimes feared of losing you. But now, never."

She laid her hand on his arm in a half-serious gesture.

"Gervaise, I have but one request to make. You will grant the first your wife asks? Promise you will not flit any more with—"

"Blanche Chetwynd, you mean?" added he, seeing her hesitate. "I can't promise; as you know, Barbara, a man can't help paying court to a pretty girl like little golden-haired Blanche. But, Barbara, can't you trust me? Remember, that as our marriage is to be kept secret—"

Barbara uttered a cry.

"Secret, Gervaise? Our marriage a secret? Oh, I never dreamed of such a thing."

Her cheeks paled, then glowed as she spoke, while Gervaise De Laurian's eyes grew threatening.

"Barbara, you must let me dictate, and without questioning my motives. I want you to distinctly understand I desire our marriage to be a profound secret, until you have my permission to divulge it."

His imperious tones seemed strangely at variance with his impassioned manner a moment before, and as Barbara De Laurian searched earnestly his handsome, flushed face, and met the light in his willful eyes, she began to realize she had found her equal in her husband; that even as she loved, so must she obey, in the strictest meaning of the word. Even as Gervaise loved her, would he rule over her.

While she had been so steadily regarding him, her beautiful lips apart in the astonishment she had felt at his language, he had abruptly laid his hand over her mouth, half-saucily, half-tenderly.

"There, tiger-lily, do not gaze so reproachfully at me. I mean to do what is best for us both, and the only course is to retain our secret, for a while at least. You'll promise me, dearest?"

There still lingered a despotism under his affectionate words; and what could Barbara do, but consent?

"Gervaise, I promise."

"I knew you would. And now I want another promise. You asked me not to flit with Blanche Chetwynd. It is a hard one to keep, Barbara, for, though not so peerless as my royal bride, she is a sweet blossom, and it is far from my nature to pass such by."

Barbara grew stately.

"But, Gervaise, you've no right to flit again with any woman. You are my husband, and, as a married man, must not devote yourself to young ladies' society as you would have done an hour ago."

Her earnest language burst from her eager lips as she laid her fair, warm hands on his arm.

He smiled; a quick, lightning-like glance of amusement.

"You may be right, Barbara, but don't forget that only to each other are we married. But, will you promise what I was about to ask? never to think of Roy Davenant?"

A hot flush shot over her cheeks, as she impatiently answered:

"Will you never have done with that old-time engagement? Gervaise, Roy and I were mere children then; we never think of such things now. You know I care for no living being but yourself."

Her confession gratified him, and, as they came up to the gate, in the gathering dusk, he kissed her.

"Go in now, my darling. Remember your promise."

He bowed, and she smiled her adieu, as she turned down the path to the house.

Gervaise De Laurian paused and watched her as she walked along the narrow path, her green skirt rustling against the grass, her flushed face outlined against the gray sky.

"Beautiful temptress! she has ruined herself and me too, I fear! If she but knew, if she but knew, ever so vaguely!"

A bitter smile broke over his handsome face, and he turned away.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE SPIDER'S WEB.

"BARBARA," said Blanche Chetwynd, as the two girls were sitting on the piazza, and her cheeks flushing as she went on, "do you know I am very much afraid I am allowing myself to think a great deal of Mr. De Laurian?"

Barbara started, but answered pleasantly:

"Mr. De Laurian is a gentleman whom few women could dislike."

She watched Blanche's face while she spoke.

"He certainly is handsome and agreeable; I have heard my father say the De Laurians were renowned for their courtliness and beauty."

"Yes?" and Barbara's eyes betrayed the interest she naturally experienced in her husband's relatives. Her inquiries and assents, though given in a quiet, indifferent manner, were only a mask to her eager anxiety.

"And the De Laurians are wealthy too, Barbara. Not that money would influence me so far as Gervaise is concerned, but I think any girl would prefer a husband who possessed both wealth and beauty."

Her cheeks flushed deeper still as she poured out her sweet, girlish confidences.

"So you have already decided to marry Mr. De Laurian, it seems, Blanche?"

A half-amused smile played on Barbara's lips as she spoke.

"Blanche laughed.

"Did I say so? Although, Barbara," and her eyes grew luminous with tenderness, while her voice mellowed to a low, confiding cadence, "I am not ashamed to admit that I love him already."

She raised her eyes to Barbara's, that were flashing darkly.

"You are not angry that I've made you my confidant, Barbara? You're not vexed at my unsolicited secret?"

She spoke in deprecating sweetness of manner, for a dark, angry cloud had settled on Barbara's proud face.

"No—not that you've honored me with your confidence; for that I thank you. But I am sorry you are so girlish, so childish as to believe the attentions of every gentleman you meet are honest. When you are older you will learn that flirtations are more amusing than lasting. Besides, Blanche, there is another reason."

Her voice grew tender as she saw the pained look in Blanche's eyes.

"A reason why I shouldn't like Gervaise De Laurian, Barbara?"

She asked the question in amazement.

"Not for your simply 'liking' him, Blanche. Of course we can all like every one we see, whereas love, particularly such love as *you* bestow, is not to be frittered away on every one."

"But the reason, Barbara?"

Her clear, questioning eyes were intently regarding Barbara's face; and the dark cheeks glowed under that innocent gaze, as she realized what the true reason was. But she returned Blanche's gaze firmly.

"It is a very simple one, Blanche, dear. Mr. De Laurian is a most egregious flit, and boasts of his reputation as such."

Slowly the blushes faded off Blanche's face.

"Barbara, no! Gervaise has held my hand many a time, he has whispered to me often; he has—even—kissed me."

"Like a molten surge the red tide returned as she leaned nearer Barbara to confide the precious secret."

"Kissed you? When?"

"Quickly, jealously, came the words.

"I can't say. I don't know. All I remember is that I feel sure he cared for me; that I know I love him."

In Barbara's face were traces of a conflict, bitterly severe. Should she not tell this trusting young girl the secret she herself despised, and that, while it was heavily binding her down, was as surely building a fearful chasm over which Blanche must fall.

She hesitated; the secret trembled on her lips; the words were ready to be uttered that should save them both from all the misery of their future lifetime.

Then, like some foreshadowing cloud came the memory of her husband's positive commands—and her love leveling all things before it, she decided to allow circumstances to mold themselves.

It was a trifling decision, but mighty results depended thereon; and fate—and the Chetwynd Curse sealed the woe of the two fair women.

"You have been very imprudent, Blanche; and now that I have placed you on your guard against him, you are enabled to cease thinking of him in so tender a manner."

"Cease loving Gervaise, Barbara? I never can, so long as I live!"

"I can not censure you, Blanche, for your devotion to him as your ideal man; for I think myself he is as perfect—setting aside his flitting propensities—as any woman would want."

A smile that would have been mischievous, had her heart been less full, lighted Blanche's face as she looked at Barbara.

"Perhaps you are a wee bit jealous, Barbara; you are so warm in your admiration while you reprove me for mine."

Barbara's haughtiest curl of lip preceded her answer.

"As a gentleman, I admire him; as a flit, I detest him."

Her color deepened, and her heart throbbed as she spoke the name "admire."

Admire Gervaise De Laurian! She, his wife! She drew her trailing skirts up in a handful of glowing crimson, and nodded a pleasant adieu to Blanche.

"I have letters to prepare for the next mail, Blanche. After dinner we will drive to Paterson for some notions I want."

On the shady piazza she left Blanche, sitting beside the window, where the snowy clematis was tossing its graceful spray.

On a rustic chair, her cheeks robbed of their flushes, her eyes full of a sad, wistful light, she leaned, her sun-bright head resting on her hand. A quick tread on the gravelled walk aroused her from her transient reverie. She caught a glimpse of a face and form that made her spring in sweet confusion from her reclining position.

Blanche, no, do not rise. I can find myself a seat. Sit still, and tell me if you are glad I have come."

Gervaise De Laurian's dark eyes, all alight with a dangerous fire, were reading her thoughts that were all too plainly mirrored on her pink cheeks, in her soft black eyes.

"Glad? I am always glad to see you, Mr. De Laurian."

"I shall not believe it if you persist in addressing me so formally. My name is Gervaise, Blanche."

She cast down her eyes under his ardent gaze.

"Gervaise, then," she repeated, almost under her breath, the varying tint on her cheeks paling and glowing.

"Thank you, *cherie*. Now, where are Mr. and Mrs. Chetwynd, and Miss Barbara?"

He drew his chair nearer as he asked the question.

"Mamma and papa are outdriving with Rex, and Barbara has gone to her room to attend to her correspondents."

"Leaving you all alone—with me," he added, tenderly.

She did not reply, for there seemed nothing to say; but her heart was fluttering like a caged bird.

"What do you suppose I came for, this morning, *cherie*?"

"I can easily guess. To practice 'Sweet Genevieve' with Barbara, or have a game of chess with Rex."

She smiled as she spoke, and looked up in his face as he leaned carelessly back in his chair; and a thrill quivered through her as she saw how handsome he was.

He did not smile a reply; his eyes were half-veiled by their long, golden-brown lashes, under which he was intensely regarding her.

"Neither the song nor the game induced me to drive down. I came purposely to see a certain little girl, who is too modest to mention herself in the list of attractions."

Blanche glanced up; but only for a second. His face told more than his words.

With a sudden gesture, he pushed the chair away, and, extending both arms, went up to the girl.

"Can you not tell? do you not know, my darling, why I have come? It was to hear you say, 'Gervaise, I love you!' Will you say it, Blanche, even as I say to you, I love you?"

He drew her head to his breast, and, with the lips that not a month before had greeted his bride, he kissed her pure mouth.

"Say it, Blanche; say it quickly. You little know how I am starving for it."

He held his arms tightly around her, while her hair streamed over his breast, and against his face.

"Oh, Gervaise, let me go. Please, please! You frighten me, indeed you do!"

"Frighten you, my dainty lady-bird? Does my love alarm you, whom I would woo as gently as a dove does its mate? Blanche, perhaps you don't love me?"

Then she clung closer to him.

"I do! I do! Gervaise, I love you!"

Her beautiful eyes told the secret her lips had feared to disclose.

But not as I love you, my Blanche, my darling. I know you are mine, though, and we will engage ourselves, shall we?"

He drew from his finger a *solitaire* diamond, too large for Blanche's taper fingers.

"Never mind; you can wear it on your watch chain, and by that means keep our betrothal secret better. You will not tell any one of it, for a time?"

"If such is your desire, Gervaise, I see no se-

rious objection in so doing, although I prefer that my parents should be acquainted with it."

She pleaded with her eyes, though her lips concurred with his will.

"But I insist upon Miss Barbara's being kept in perfect ignorance. I specially insist upon that."

"That shall be exactly as you wish. Barbara shall never hear of our engagement until you tell her. There, Gervaise, does that satisfy you?"

She laid her warm fingers on his hair, while he lay back in kindly grace against the chair, receiving her gentle caresses as naturally as though she had been created for that especial purpose and no other.

As she spoke, a smile of triumphal pride and gratified delight spread over his face.

"That promise, faithfully kept, is all I ask. Now, my darling, I am sure I see the Chetwynd carriage entering the drive—yes, it is. Let me kiss you good-by, Blanche, darling, and after lunch I will come for you and Miss Barbara for a ride to the Falls, up at Paterson."

He arose, and took her in his arms, and kissed her again and again. Then he laid one hand on her shoulder, and stood gazing intently on her scarlet face.

Neither heard footsteps, or knew of a presence, till Barbara's high, clear voice broke the delicious stillness.

(To be continued.)

## The False Widow:

OR,  
FLORIEN REDESDALE'S FORTUNE.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,  
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "CECIL'S DECEIT," "STRANGELY WED," "MADAME DUGRAND'S PRODIGES," ETC., ETC.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE BAL MASQUE.

"THE last day—the very last of all these pleasant sittings."

"Why, how dolefully you speak, Mr. Kenyon! One might suppose it to be the very last day before the angel's summons for the gathering of the hosts. There is an end to all things, you know. Don't, please, cloud the last of our mornings here by such a gloomy physiognomy."

"And you speak lightly as though it were not the slightest moment that they are ended. As though it didn't bring us to the end of a chapter which has run on so deliciously, entrancingly smooth that I, at least, lost sight of the fact there must be an abrupt close to it. There, Miss Redesdale, I have put the last coral tinge on the lips that are like life enough to speak, and the last glint of bronze to that wondrously lovely hair, and now—what do you think of yourself?"

"How can you expect me to pass judgment upon myself? But I will tell you what I think of the portrait as a portrait. I think you have made a wifely mistake in supposing that this is not the branch of your profession you are bound to excel in. Why, you have caught the very expression of life—you have made me look as I only can look in my best and brightest moments. As a flattering representation it is perfect, Mr. Kenyon. There is magic in your art, surely."

"But the spell of the enchantress is broken. Do you suppose I could ever paint like that again? I have inhabited the realms of inspiration, and now I must go back to dull earth; I have had rosy ether and the pure gold of sunshine turn tangible under my touch, and after this I can only dip my brush in carmine and yellow ochre. I shall never accomplish another such wonderful work. And, *apropos* of my works, I have you to thank for the disposal of my 'Lorelle'—I am sure of it, notwithstanding."

"Not me, certainly, Mr. Kenyon, if it is sold. The cause of art and you are no more indebted to me than the score or so of Clodvins you have limned before now. I have not departed from the accustomed way, I do assure you."

"Then I am at a loss indeed. 'Lorelle' is gone, and the purchaser nameless; I thought—I was presumptuous enough to hope you had encouraged me in that, because I wished it might be so. Odd that I should wish to be under further obligation to you, isn't it?"

"I would not have been placing you under obligation had I bought your picture; that is a bubble of opinion which you exploded, if you remember. The product of a man's brain is worth the money paid for it as well as the work of his hands—and a picture embraces both. I am not impressionable, I think—not imaginatively so, but your 'Lorelle' affected me strangely and unpleasantly. It has haunted me since I saw it like both a reproach and a warning. If I were given to indulging those fancies called presentiments, I should think that our fates—yours, and mine—were in some way involved together; some bitter, painful, disastrous year. The impression is there and I can not banish it, foolish as it seems."

"She was speaking more to herself than to him. He had busied himself putting away his brushes; something like a shade rested upon his face now that his task was completed and he turned to her.

"I did not carry out the fitting idea in that picture," said he. "I should have painted myself as the victim. I am just that far enchanted by a delusively fair face, and held spell-bound by airen tones—yours, Florien. Is the fatal simile to be followed out, or is there a counter-charm which shall give a heart to the Circe, heaven to her worshiper?"

Florien swept up from her chair hastily. The young artist had been a pleasant companion. She had laughed with him, talked with him, sung with him—in fact, established one of those intimacies which is always dangerous for man and woman to indulge. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, sinks beneath its delusive quicksand; and now Florien comprehended all in a moment the dangerous quality of the ground she had been treading.

"Come, Mr. Kenyon, we are both growing morbidly fanciful, I think. The subject is an unhappy one, however different your execution of it. Let me call mamma to pass her judgment on the portrait, now that it is completed."

"Miss Redesdale!" He threw himself in her way and caught her hand, speaking with impetuous fervor. "Wait for one moment. I have been living in a dream these last two months—such a glorious dream!—which you can make reality if you will. Must I leave the new-found brightness of life—the inspiration which has caused a thing so lifelike as that to grow under my brush?"

Just then came a rustle of silk through the corridor, and Florien drew away her hand with a quick breath of relief. She was saved from an embarrassing scene, but she found time to utter a warning of how baseless his hopes were, before the door unclosed.

"Dreams are always disappointments, Mr. Kenyon—your future holds too much bright promise to be wrecked on anything so intangible. Do you comprehend the moral?—don't dream. Ah, *you*, mamma! I was just about going for you."

"She would have refused me," Louis thought.

"The interruption was opportune. As it is, I have not proposed, nor has she rejected me. A little more time and a great deal of anstrive devotion, and I flatter myself the reward is gained."

He lingered after they were gone, cleaning his palette and packing his paraphernalia for removal. As he worked, he broke out singing some rollicking drinking chorus. The rich, baritone voice floated out at the door, half open, reaching Florien's ear as she went down the wide stairway. She paused to listen with a little smile upon her lips.

"And in another moment the boy would have declared himself on the very verge of his life's despair. What a versatile nature must be, or—her face shivered here—"did he not understand me after all? At any rate, my lovers are readily reconciled—Messieurs Lynne and Arnold, for examples."

She half laughed, half sighed at the recollection, and passed on, wondering if the reality of true and lasting love had gone out with the times, as the cynics claimed.

A week after that, somebody wound up the gayeties of the season by a *bal masque*. This somebody was one of the notables, owning a modern palace where "all the world" might gather, and in truth all the world was represented there that night.

The brilliant lights shone down on the usual general medley—nymphs, witches, peasants, courtiers, brigands—interspersed with well-known characters from history and romance, personated in the indifferent and inconsistent manner generally attained. Richard III. carried his deformity side by side with a coquettish Girl of the Period. Good Queen Bess, in her immense ruff, was keeping company with a Crusader of the Twelfth century, while the Wandering Jew danced attendance on Mary of Scots.

A fierce Bedouin monopolized a pretty Swiss peasant-girl; a Spanish Don flirted with a guz-winged angel, and a stalwart Buccaneer was holding a whispered consultation with a meek Sister of Charity. There was Night, with dusky, star-gemmed robes; Morning, a mass of fleecy clouds, gray, rosy, and purple-tinged; Fire, vividly suggestive in scarlet silk and carbuncles which seemed ablaze as they caught the light. The Sea was represented, too, a tall, willowy figure in green satin robes, shimmering through a foam of snowy lace, with ornaments of shell and coral, and wreaths of sea-weed.

This figure was pausing under an arch where the crowd parted on either hand, when she was joined by a plain mask.

"The sea was never fairer, but your choice of character is not emblematic. Her worst enemy—if she has an enemy—could never charge the smiling deceit of the waters to Miss Redesdale."

"I can certainly trust to Mr. Lessingham's penetration," she laughed. "Of a dozen who have accused me you are the first to pierce the disguise. How comes it that you are not in character?"

"Couldn't find one to suit, or couldn't suit myself to one you choose. Besides, I have been out of town, and only got back at the eleventh hour, which means just in time for a late dinner, and to dress for the occasion. I haven't discovered two others that I know in all this throng. Ah, there is one now; that Knight Templar with the gold cross on his shoulder—that is Marquestone, I'm sure."

"Yes, and the Lady Abbess carrying herself in such a stately way is mamma."

"See; and the colonel is making his way to join her. But who is that tall monk following so close? He is moving in their wake faithful as a shadow."

"It is no one I know," Florien answered, after a minute's observation. "There is not a gentleman among my acquaintances so tall unless it should be yourself, Mr. Lessingham. He quite overtops my recognition."

"And mine. Look and tremble, my fair young sea, if you chance to be a truant. That is certainly old Neptune yonder wearing a thunderbolt on his brow, and he is making straight for the very spot. Come and waltz with me if you would escape his wrath."

"How strange!" said Florien, with a glance at the odd figure with streaming hoary hair.

"Who can he be? What a queer coincidence!"

"Not a coincidence, I am sure. It is some one who has costumed himself to be in keeping with your character."

"But I kept it strictly a secret."

"My dear Miss Redesdale, you have a maid, have you not?—and maids always have vulnerable points."

She took his arm and they moved in the direction of the dancing hall, eluding Neptune in the crowd.

"He shall be punished for his presumption, whoever he is," said Florien. "Will you undertake the task of keeping me clear of him?"

"If you will honor me with the trust."

They whirled away with the dancers at that. Though Aubrey had penetrated her disguise, scarcely another in the room had guessed it, but now a general buzz and whisper went round.

"The sea?—ah, yes. By Jove, it's the Redesdale sea. No one else ever waltzed like that. Who is the mask?—oh! Lessingham. See that old Neptune watching the two. Looks stormy, doesn't he? Odd conceit throughout."

The waltz ended, Aubrey led her away. There was an open window temptingly near, and without a balcony flooded with the radiance of the full moon. They passed through, and he dropped the curtains after them. It was May, now, and the balmy night air was most refreshing after the stifling atmosphere within. They were quite alone under the clear night sky.

Both took off their masks, and then walked up and down the moonlit space, saying little but blissfully forgetful of all the world beside themselves.

Such a moment, such quiet, peaceful influence about them, such harmony of responsive rapture in their souls—it was not possible for the time to pass without the "old, old story" being told again.

They had paused unconsciously in their walk, their eyes met, and words were scarcely needed to complete the declaration of their loves.

But, words came at last, their murmur soft as the coo of turtle-doves, their import the same sweet nothingness which means so much to those who acknowledge themselves loving and loved.

"I think I lost my heart to you that night two years ago," Aubrey said at last. "I have never forgotten your face as I saw it first, sweet, shy, distressed, laughing and defiant, all at once. I believe I should always have realized a vague sense of my loss had I never been nearer or more to you than I was that night. Hearts will assert themselves at first sight sometimes even in our day, Florien. My Florien—my very, very own!"

once and recognized me—I thought you had—and you have prepared yourself for this time, knowing it must come.

"You are apt at inference. Perhaps you will explain why you have waited; that day was—how long ago?—a month or more. Permit me though if I am to be detained."

She wheeled about a chair which stood there, and seated herself under the single light, her head thrown back and her gaze meeting his, a mocking, smiling expression on her face. Yet she was quivering beneath all, and this forced composure was a terrible strain upon her.

"Why have I spared you this long? It seems incredible that I should care to spare you, does it not? After weeks too which seemed as years on that little sand-bank in midst of a boundless sea—to brood over my wrongs, and store up vengeance against you. And I suffered there until it makes my brain reel even now to remember."

"How did you escape?" she asked. "You were like one dead when I was rescued. I thought—well, hoped then—that it was out of the range of vessels. I am sure the sailors said so."

"It was. I was found and taken away by a party of natives from some one of the larger islands further to the south. They belonged to a peaceable tribe, and were partly civilized; had they been savages they would undoubtedly have killed me upon the spot, so weak and utterly defenseless was I."

"And not one left to carry the tale," she murmured. "well, what then?"

"They took me with them to their own settlements. They had missionaries among them, and trading-posts established on their coasts. I was well treated, and permitted to depart on the first vessel which touched, after I was sufficiently recovered to bear the voyage."

"How you disappoint me, Alec. Not a hair-breadth escape nor a thrilling adventure! Besides a little wholesome solitude, no greater hardships than I met and endured! You would never make a fortune at writing up a book of your experience as I thought of suggesting. I really can not comprehend those horrible sufferings you pleaded. Where did they come in, pray?"

"Think of weeks upon weeks on that little patch of land, myself seeming the only soul in the universe, the waters stretching away on every side, and not a speck to break the whole expanse. Too weak to walk, I could only crawl from place to place, finding food enough to sustain life in the snails and muscles which the tide washed up. Not suffer! My God! There were days when my brain was one surge of liquid fire, when the blood plowed like hot lead through my veins."

He was walking up and down the little room, his face blanching even now at the recollection.

And I was tortured mentally too. I could imagine how you were betraying the trust which I would have faithfully fulfilled. I only wonder that I lived at all. I would have died but for thoughts of my child—the baby-girl I was weak enough to give up for you years ago."

"I dreamed of her once, a dream so vivid that it has been with me ever since."

"I thought that I was somewhere groping in thick darkness. Far above was a little gleam of light toward which I strained my eyes continually, and at last, after what seemed ages of hopeless despair, I was borne up, and the light grew larger and brighter as I neared it."

"Then all at once I was standing in Heaven's sunlight. I tried to form a prayer of thanks giving, but my heart was like lead, and my lips moved without uttering a sound. An evil spell seemed upon me. Something by my side, which was a shadow at first, gradually took form, and you were standing there with just the mocking smile on your face which you are wearing now."

"You were pointing back into the depths of darkness from which I had risen?"

"Look!" you said; "You have escaped, but she shall perish!"

"I looked. I was powerless to resist. And wavering over that dark abyss I saw a fair young girl—a girl in spotless white robes and with a glory of yellow hair waving about her, and as I saw her the conviction came to me that this was my own child. While she trembled there upon the verge, you put out your hand and pushed her over; she threw out her arms and turned her face with the agony of death upon it as if imploring help of me. I sprang forward and caught her."

"I have never been able to shake off the impression of that dream. Where is she, Mirette—where is my daughter?"

"How should I know? She went to Europe years ago with her adopted mamma; I know nothing of her since that."

"It is false. You made me your dupe when you imposed that story on me. Mrs. Snow—I have learned her name after all your keeping it from me, you see—went to Europe, died there, but she did not take the child along. I am positive of that. Where is she, Mirette? You who knew of Mrs. Snow's movements then, must know what she did with my girl."

Mrs. Redesdale dropped her eyes away from his face for the first. This man held her destiny as it were in his hands, could twist it any way, and her only chance was to blind him for a time, while she should consummate her ends. And he himself had shown her the way he might be led.

"Mirette, where is she?"

"Suppose I know, do you think I would tell you? Restore the girl and have you push me over into the depths—that is the way it would end. No, thank you, I prefer even the insecure footing of the dizzy night and your strength pitted against me."

"You do know where she is. Give her back to me unharmed, and I can forgive you every thing."

"My dear Alec, I am not craving your forgiveness. That is a boon not worth the asking—certainly not a prize with which to tempt me. Say now, well—that you will leave me quite unmolested, that you will never assert, by deed or word, that you have known me to be other than I am."

"You should know me better than to ask that. No, Mirette, good will not spring out of evil, and I will not buy my knowledge by such means. I shall find my daughter with your aid or without it. I may have difficulties to overcome, but I will find her. I shall make it the great aim of my life until I die."

"Men take up with hobbies sometimes for lack of any thing better; you may take up a Quixotic search for yours. This I assure you, you may spend all your life, but you will never find her."

"If she lives I will."

"Then she is dead—to you. You will gain nothing by depositing me, Alec; you will lose your only chance of ever finding the girl. I am detesting no one, and certainly you are not wishing to urge any claim upon me. I think you are as well content as I am to let the old life lie buried. Go your way and leave me to follow mine; it is your only chance of ever finding her."

He began again the restless pacing up and down the room, which he had stopped for a moment. Sounds of merriment from the throng penetrated the closed room, but no one

approached it. For full five minutes there was silence between them, and then he paused, facing her.

"I have left you undisturbed this long, Mirette. I wanted to see if you had any new devilry in hand, and to discover how far you had acted fairly by Miss Redesdale. If you will promise to give up every thing to her eventually—every thing her father's wife was entitled to hold—I will give you a reasonable time to renounce the honors which you are wearing, in whatever way you may choose. I have no wish to denounce you and give the whole affair publicity; if you care to make your own explanations privately—honestly, mind—I will give you a month, or three months, if you like, to do it. That if you restore my child; otherwise, I will go with the whole story to the trustees to-morrow and let them take their own course."

"I will agree to it," she said, after a moment's deliberation. "I don't know where your daughter is. Mrs. Snow left her in a young ladies' school, where she was educated for a music teacher, nursery governess, or something of the kind. She left there a year ago, but I'll undertake to find her for you. You discovered no trace of her further than you have told me."

"Scarcely a trace, but what might lead to one. I bought a picture a week ago, and one of the figures in it wears the very face which I saw in my dream, her face, I am sure, painted from life. If you try to evade me, I shall hunt up the artist and unravel the skein in another way."

"And be disappointed in finding your pictured face a purely fanciful creation. Your daughter is not the yellow-haired angel you say, if I remember her rightly."

To herself she was thinking:

"It will be no impossible matter to find an affectionate child for such an anxious father. The streets of New York may even supply a yellow-haired angel, if he insists on it—fallen-angel though she may be. And three months leave margin enough to work in."

"If you deceive me—if you dare to deceive me in any way, I will show you no mercy—none!" She shrank before the flash of his eyes, fixed sternly upon her, wondering with a horrified thrill if her face had reflected her thought. But she was herself in a moment, impassive, self-possessed.

"Don't be melodramatic, Alec. We shall not have our little act ending in a tragedy. Give me an address where I can find you, and give me my own time. I shall both act and report promptly, but I may be out of the city for a week or a month, as the case is, and you must wait patiently."

He gave her the address, and made no effort to detain her when she offered to go. He watched her out of the door, and sunk into the seat she had vacated, with a heavily drawn sigh.

"If I was not so hampered just now, I would not trust to her, but she can not play a wrong game, no matter how much inclined. My little girl! For her sake I must be patient and work up those claims. I shall have to trust to Mirette, for all my seeking was without result."

And Mrs. Redesdale had paused in a shadowy nook of the stairway to push the damp hair up from her forehead, and take a long, deep breath before she adjusted her mask.

"How it has tired me! But I have beaten him down, hoodwinked him, as I shall continue to do to the end of all of them."

She was back with the company in time for unmasking at the supper-table, and few, if any, observed the absence of the nook, who had haunted her steps like a gray shadow during the early part of the evening.

She sought out Florian and carried her away at the earliest permissible hour, but the moonlight and starlight were lost in the darkness which precedes the dawn as they were driven through the silent streets.

The sleepy footman, who opened the door, stopped her with a card he had ready. Florian, quite unobtrusively, ran up the stairs lightly, as though there was no such thing as fatigue, or as if she had not been dancing half the night. Mrs. Redesdale waited till she was quite out of sight, holding the pasteboard after one glance at it.

Unconscious as the hour was even for a jealous suitor to present a claim, Louis Kenyon was there awaiting her return.

She found him more excited than she had seen him since that memorable interview after her trip to the coast. He was standing, glowering through a window at the darkness without, but wheeled about at sound of the opening door.

"What brings you here at such a time, Louis? You might advance your interests better by acting upon the suggestions I give you; and Neptune, whose appearance was of such brief duration, let the Sea be whisked away under his very eyes."

"My eyes did me service, at any rate—and my ears, too. Do you know how matters are progressing, Mrs. Redesdale?" He never called her by name now when alone together. "Your beautiful stepdaughter, whom you have been so confidently promising to me, accepted Lessingham to-night."

Another obstacle! She set her lips close, as she turned her angry glance upon him.

"You let it come to that? What inexcusable mismanagement! I trusted you to make your own impression, and your own way."

"It is not my fault if I fail, as I don't acknowledge to having done yet. I haven't undertaken this game to throw up the sponge while there's one chance left. If you will operate, there is still a desperate remedy which may avail us."

"What?"

And in the glimmering gray before the rosy tinges of the dawn, he unfolded his hastily-constructed plot.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 149.)

## A NEW SERIAL ROMANCE

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Red Rajah," "Double-Death," "Rock Rider," etc.

The reader has a new treat in store, for we have from Mr. Whitaker's hand a sea and shore romance, which, in several particulars, is one of the most captivating stories that has yet fallen from his delightful pen. It is

## THE SEA CAT;

OR,  
The Witch of Darien.

A STORY OF THE BUCCANERS.

In which Morgan, the celebrated Sea Rover and enemy of the Spaniards, plays out an episode in his astonishing career that is literally enthralling as a narration. It may be anticipated with all curiosity and interest, for it will fully answer, in its exciting and thrilling narrative, any expectancy formed.

LOOK OUT FOR IT.

## GRUMBLE NOT.

BY C.

Ah, me! I sigh and moan,  
Why must I wander in sorrow alone?  
Why can not I my ambition attain  
Without any trouble, without any pain?  
Why must I linger in misery here,  
While the friends whom I love and reverse  
Have left forever this mundane sphere,  
And gone to a more bright and dear?

And as I sigh, as I sit and think  
Of the days to come, so do my lips drip  
The words that seem from my soul to flow—  
As the snow-flakes from the heavens go:  
It is not, for mortals to jilt the veil,  
And with the vision their sight regale;  
So bear your cross—grumble not  
At what you term your unhappy lot!

## A New Way of Getting a Wife.

BY FREDERICK DEWEY.

"Miss Cartledge?"

"Well?"

"Will you be my wife?"

"That is—you are so abrupt—it is so sudden—"

"Will you marry me?"

"Oh, Mr. Webster!"

"Will you be my wife?"

"No! there!" Miss Cartledge turned red and white rapidly.

"What! you don't mean to say so! How relieved I am! You don't know how apprehensive I was that you would consent."

"Sir!" and petite, brown-eyed Nellie Cartledge flashed upon him a look of anger.

"Hurrah! Miss Cartledge, you have made me a happy man."

"Please allow me to withdraw my arm, sir."

"I would much rather you wouldn't. My hand is in my breast pocket and I have left my gloves at the hotel. I cut my finger this morning and I am afraid I will take cold in it if I take it out."

"If you are a gentleman, sir, you will oblige me by complying with my demand."

"I am not a gentleman. I am a lawyer."

"Frank Webster, I did not think this of you; I did not indeed."

Her eyes were looking up into his with a sad, surprised expression in their bonny brown depths. He winced.

"Pardon me—forgive my impertinence!" he said, with sudden gravity. "I am very rude. There! your arm is at liberty, Miss Cartledge."

The wee, charming creature swept him a graceful, freezing courtesy and marched off to the distant hotel. He watched her for a moment, then lit his cigar with a sigh.

"Ah, me! I guess I'll go back to town to-morrow. I hate the coast. By thunder!" he resumed, with sudden vehemence, "she would make a capital wife. There is no extravagance or nonsense about her—that is a fact."

Webster was about twenty-eight, capable in everything, but wonderful as a detective-lawyer. Give him an intricate case to carry through. His subtle, foretelling brain would squirm and twist, argue and persuade, and eventually win. He was known as "Honest" Webster; a name given, not in malice or a spirit of burlesque, but in respect and esteem. He was in good practice and was rapidly accumulating a snug living.

In addition to his mental powers he had a cool, exasperating indifference, and a large share of native effrontery vulgarly styled "cheek." And he never betrayed agitation, no matter how disappointed and embarrassed he might be—an invaluable quality for a lawyer.

Miss Nellie Cartledge was a sweet, confiding girl with a large amount of honest uncommon sense, without being aware of it. She was very candid but not rude; extremely sensitive without imagining every one was continually making remarks about her; and her father was only "comfortable."

She went to the hotel, prepared for dinner, chatted a half-hour with her bosom friend—and kept Webster's rejection to herself. You see this very uncommon young lady was something decidedly out of the ordinary course—craving the pardon of the confiding sex.

Webster smoked a cigar after dinner, went on the piazza and saw Nellie gracefully amusing a romantic-looking lieutenant in white gloves, fierce mustache, and self-possession. He threw her a kiss. She deliberately turned her back to him, then looked anxiously over her shoulder the next second to see whether he noticed the act. He did and smiled knowingly, then lazily started away toward the cliffs.

"Impudence!" she exclaimed, red and white by turns.

"I did not understand you, Miss Cartledge," insinuated the lieutenant, bowing low with an irresistible smile.

"Oh, nothing; only some people are so disagreeable."

The lieutenant's mustache twisted a trifle. "I hope Miss Cartledge does not—"

"Oh, I did not mean you," she hastily declared. "I think you are so different from many rude people here."

Webster stood outlined on the summit of a cliff for a moment, looking out over the sea. Then he sat down, evidently to remain for a while.

Nellie was suddenly seized with a vehement desire to walk on the cliffs. The lieutenant felt flattered and a little exultant. His dissipation bills were very large and he was very well acquainted with her, and he thought here was a splendid opportunity to get a wife and satisfy his creditors, and so kill two birds with one stone.

He was a man accustomed to sudden changes, to instantly obey commands without stopping to consider them, and to lead forlorn hopes. In the army he was known as Tiger Rogier. They were almost half way to the cliffs, and concealed from the hotel, when after reflecting a moment, he spoke:

"A bachelor's life is a dreary one, Miss Cartledge."

"Ah!"

"Yes, very much so. And especially when the bachelor is in the army."

"I supposed that the army was a prolific source of gaiety and amusement."

"Well, yes; at times. When quartered in a sprightly town where is good society it is very pleasant. But you will excuse me when I say that at certain times it is devilish dull."

"And the officers use such refined language, too."

She was a little vexed at his freedom of speech. He saw it and hastily endeavored to correct it. He had lost at the start.

"Please pardon me!" he said. "I only spoke thus by way of strong emphasis. Do not think I habitually swear."

He was the wildest, profane man in his company, and she was well aware of it. By way of an answer she only smiled ironically. She changed the subject.

"There is Frank Webster yonder. He is a queer one."

"He is very eccentric," she replied, languidly.

"Honest Webster?" he said, with an almost imperceptible sneer. She noticed it instantly.

"He is honest—very deserving of his name. For probity Mr. Webster is quite famous."

Webster was quite close and heard the mention of his name, though not aware of the connection. He turned and looked at her steadily. She was leaning on the officer's arm, regarding his face with a gracious smile. She was evidently pleased with his company.

They came on, and Nellie by some unaccountable caprice smiled sweetly and laughed at every word the lieutenant uttered. The latter was pleased and slackened his pace, gazing down at her familiarly.

The cliff was high and precipitous at this place, and the path wound down on the side, on a sort of a ledge on which two persons could not walk abreast. Webster was on the narrow part of the ledge. He was lighting a fresh cigar when they descended, and when he had finished they were close upon him. Respectfully lifting his hat he stopped aside to allow them to pass, politely giving them the inner and safe side. It was a close position, and he was obliged to exert all his strength in bracing himself to prevent being dashed to pieces below. But he would have done it safely had not Nellie's foot slipped on a pebble. Her foot struck his sharply. He threw up his arms, reeled, then disappeared over the brink.

She grasped the lieutenant, gazing with livid face and dilated eyes down the cliff where he had disappeared, every moment expecting to hear his cry of agony as he was dashed to pieces below. The hardy officer accustomed to death in his most revolting and horrible forms felt his heart beat slower and slower and the blood leave his face. But his presence of mind never deserted him and he sturdily clung to his fair companion to keep her from falling, for she was half fainting.

For nearly thirty seconds they held their breath, and listened in fearful silence. No sound was heard. The lieutenant cautiously peered over the brink while she sunk half fainting against the cliff, awaiting the dreaded discovery.

"Great Heavens!" shouted Rogier. "He is hanging to a bush close by!"

She started to his side, now fearless of the awful proximity to the brink. She looked over. He was hanging with ghastly face to a small shrub which bent under his weight so the roots were slowly giving way. In a few short moments they would be detached, and then—

Quickwitted Tiger Rogier was in his element. "You stay right here!" he commanded. "I won't be gone but a second."

"For Heaven's sake be quick!" she gasped.

"Oh, my darling!"

Rogier was speeding already on his way to the boat hanging just at the bottom of the cliff, for a rope. He flew like a hurricane, braving tremendous leaps and darting like a chamois along the brink of the steep cliff.

The roots still kept moving, moving, and now and then a clod of earth dropped from them. They could not hold him up long. She could not see his face for it was pressed closely to the cliff. The muscles of his hands stood out like whipcords and the blood had settled in the tips of his fingers. They were undergoing an immense strain.

She wrung her hands in agony and looked down the cliff. Rogier had disappeared. He was undoubtedly at the landing. It had taken him only a few seconds to descend. It would take him as many minutes to climb the steep cliff. Meanwhile the roots were giving, faster and faster each moment. As she wrung her hands they touched a scarf which hung at her shoulder. With the rapidity of thought with which women are blessed when those they love are in danger she grasped this. It was strong and tightly woven and would hold a large weight.

Spreading her skirts loosely about she passed her foot round a projecting rock behind her, then lay flat along the ledge, and dropped one end of the scarf to him.

"Take this!" she said, wildly. "Take it, for God's sake!"

"I can't!" he groaned, with averted face.

"Grasp it!" she commanded.

"I can't."

"Yes, you can. I will pull you up."

"You are not strong enough. It will drag you over the brink."

"No, it won't! I have the strength of a tiger."

She had at that moment.

"I will die alone!" he groaned.

One root gave entirely away. She shrieked.

"Will you marry me if I will?" he asked, not even looking up. His voice was forced and gasping.

"Oh, yes! to-night, to-morrow! any time. Oh, for Heaven's sake, my darling, take hold."

"I guess I'll wait for Tiger," he calmly said, letting go his hold of the bush, which flew up, almost striking her in the face.

In her fright she had nearly fainted and fallen over the brink. Then amazement succeeded terror.

Instead of falling, and with a cry of agony being dashed to pieces below, he stood with his hands in his pockets calmly regarding her.

"Please toss me down my match-box!" he said. "I had it in my hand when I fell and it dropped on the ledge. I am perishing for a cigar."

She was astonished, and clasped her hands.

"What does it all mean?"

"It means that I am standing on a second ledge, but I wouldn't be if it were not for that blessed bush. So don't be alarmed, my angel. The ledge is not very wide, but still I can spend a few moments very cozily here if you will drop down my match-safe. I caught the bush when I fell you know, and my feet touched the ledge and stuck there by instinct. I can wait comfortably for a few minutes till Tiger comes with a rope. Are you ever going to drop down the match-safe?"

"No; I am not. That revenge is at least in my power. You were very cruel to try my feelings so."

"I am a brute, my angel. Please toss my match-safe down; please do."

"I will not! there."

"You don't know how sorry I am—"

"It makes no difference. You were very, very cruel to frighten me so. I will now have a little revenge at least."

"Are you going to marry me, to-night?" he maliciously asked, with that exasperating smile for which he was noted.

"No, sir! I am not, and I have a good mind never to."

"You can't do that."

"Why?"

His features changed their expression to one of pure tenderness.

"Because you love me, my angel."

"I do, I do!" she whispered.

Great was Rogier's amazement when he fished him up, alive, and with Nellie looking very happy and very charming.

"What does it all mean? Why, are you not dead?"

"It means that as my coat-tails are torn completely off, and as I have lost my hat, and as my face is dirty and bruised, it is a startling descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. And, passing my arm tenderly round Nellie's waist, 'it means that I have invented a new way of getting a wife.'

## THE WANDERER'S LAMENT.

Musings by the sea-shore.

BY CHARLES OLLIVANT.

Alone upon a foreign strand,  
Alone in my adopted home,  
With no dear friend to take my hand,  
To say unto me: "Come—oh, come!"

Ah! little dream the timid youth  
Who stay at home at ease,  
What thoughts of sad and bitter ruth  
Come unto those who cross the seas.

They know not what it is to be  
Away from all held dear;  
None but a stranger's face to see—  
A stranger's voice to hear.

No more a mother's care to bless,  
When stricken down by sickness sore;  
No more to feel the soft caress  
Of that fair being you adore.

Ah, yes, 'tis hard alone to dwell  
Afar from friends and home—  
A truth that only those can tell  
Whose fate has been to roam.

And yet, 'tis life in foreign climes  
Is rife with troubles and alarms,  
Unto the spirit there are times  
When life there hath its charms.

'Tis when the air is pure and light,  
The sky is deeply blue,  
The orb of day is shining bright,  
The breeze is fresh with dew.

And when unto the eyes unfold  
Views picturesque and grand;  
The sunset with its crown of gold,  
The lights and shades of sea and land.

To see in majesty appear  
The glorious Queen of Night—  
A warning to us mortals here  
Our Savior's power to alight.

The mountain with its lofty crest  
Robed in perennial snow—  
A monument to peace and rest  
To tollers in the vale below.

The ocean too imparts delight,  
In tempest and in calm;  
The former makes the spirit light—  
The latter gives it balm.

When sadly on the shore you stand,  
The wild waves madly leap,  
You feel they're under God's command,  
That as His word they sleep.

And when the waves are hushed and still,  
All bathed in moonlight sheen;  
Oh! then the soul doth drink its fill  
Of heavenly thoughts serene.

The heart ascends in joy to Him  
Who made this world so fair;  
And from the lips flows forth a hymn  
In praise of His great care.

## David Herrick's Ruse.

BY JAMES R. HENLEY.

OLD farmer Graham sat in his large easy-chair, looking the very picture of contentment. His daughter, Mary, about eighteen years of age, sat on a little stool at his feet, and with her chin resting on his knee, was looking in his face with a wishful look.

"You say this city chap has asked you to be his wife?" said the old farmer, looking at his child over the top of his brass-rimmed spectacles.

"Yes, father," replied the blushing girl.

"No doubt he's one of those shiftless, good-for-nothing city loungers," continued the farmer. "Can he earn his own living?"

"He will be here to-night to see you, and will answer you himself," said Mary, as she left the room to answer the shrill call of her mother.

Mary Graham was an only child, and her grandfather naturally desired to see her comfortably settled down in life, ere he took his departure for another world.

That evening when David Herrick (the city chap), entered the old farm-house, he proceeded directly to the cosy sitting-room, where the old man sat, and, presenting his case, asked for a favorable answer.

"What are you good for? How much are you worth?" asked the farmer.

"I am worth about ten thousand dollars," replied David, a little indignantly.

"Left to you by some relative or friend, no doubt. Look at those white hands of yours. You couldn't earn a meal of victuals for yourself, let alone a wife. The man that marries my daughter must be able to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. As you can't do that, you had better be off as soon as possible."

David Herrick was compelled to acknowledge that what the farmer had said was so. But he determined to go to work and earn his own living, or, at least, show the farmer that he could.

One morning, about a week after the above conversation had taken place, the old farmer stood in his doorway, wondering how so much work was to be done, and no one to help him do it, when he was accosted by a rather verdant-looking youth as follows:

"Morning, squire. I heard yer wanted to hire a hand for layin'. Think I'll do?"

Farmer Graham glanced at the uncombed hair and dirty-looking hands of the applicant, and was quite satisfied that he would do, for he replied:

"Yes, guess you'll do. What's your name?"

"Jeremiah Hopkins," replied the man.

Jerrie was engaged and set to work, and at first was rather awkward with rake and pitchfork, but after a day or two he got along admirably.

Mary, in the meantime, was mourning for her absent lover, and looked pale and despondent, until one day, when the squire was absent in town, the hired man coolly walked into the kitchen, where Mary was, and removing his wig and beard, stood gazing at her.

"Oh, David!" said Mary, as she gave a little scream.

Then both of them sat down and talked the matter over until it was nearly time for the old farmer to return, and then David replaced his disguise and resumed his work.

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## UNTRUE.

BY HAP HAZARD.

When thou art false, what truth can be?  
I grope in sore bewilderment  
I scarce believe mine own intent,  
Since that I was deceived in thee.

But, nay! 'tis some distempered dream,  
And vapors foul beguile my sense,  
I'll drive the haunting fancies hence  
They are not real, but only seem.

As well the Orient glow might prove  
False harbinger of budding day,  
As the coy blushes' fitful play  
In thy soft cheek mean aught but love.

Then—when the deep, unchanging blue  
Of Heaven shall symbolize deceit—  
Duplicitous shall harbor meet  
Find in thine eye of kindred hue.

Doth treachery lurk in the call  
Of thine responsive to its mate?  
And once the turtle-dove for hate?  
Thy voice proclaims thee true, my all!

And yet, what means this chilling pain?  
Nay, 'tis a dream! Awake! Awake,  
My heart! and from thy pulses shake  
This incubus; and seek again—

Alas! I seek what? Th' averted look  
That once so eager met my glance?  
The shrinking from my fond advance,  
As loth Love's dalliance to brook?

And why that sudden downcast eye  
At his approach—the deepened glow  
That mantles o'er her cheek and brow—  
The quickened breath—the fluttering sigh?

Nay! drink, my soul, the bitter rue!  
Heap—heap the ashes on thy head!  
Love's but a name, all truth is dead,  
Since she—God help me!—she's untrue!

## A Good Investment.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

They were both fine-looking, well-dressed young men, and they sat conversing on board the ferry-boat in a very friendly sort of way, that, while their manner was earnest, was entirely free from ostentation.

One of them, the taller of the two, with dark-brown hair and serious brown eyes, and whose gravity of demeanor was in perfect accord with his simple, gentlemanly style of attire, was Kenneth Mortimer; and he was answering, in a quiet, reticent way, Phil Darrel's remarks.

"Yes, I know, of course, who lives there—Miss Trevelyn."

And, to Darrel's surprise, Kenneth's cheeks reddened suspiciously.

"Upon my soul I can't be possible, my boy, that the light of Miss Trevelyn's eyes have dazzled you, too? Shades of—"

"Sh, not so loud, if you please, Phil; although, if you are acquainted with the lady, you are scarcely to be censured for any enthusiasm you may display."

Darrel laughed, as he threw his cigar out over the guards.

"Oh, I've heard all about her, time and again, from various smitten 'lovers.' But I am surprised that you are so decidedly 'gone.' He spoke just a little sarcastically."

"If you mean I have learned to care very much for Addie Trevelyn, Phil, you are right. I would rather have her for my wife than any woman I ever saw."

A saucy smile shot from Phil Darrel's eyes.

"Miss Trevelyn and her fortune wouldn't come amiss now, would they? Angels don't often possess as much filthy lucre as this wingless one of yours."

"Phil! don't talk so about Addie Trevelyn. If she is beyond my reach, she shall not be jested about to me, or where I can hear it. She is an angel, though, Phil, if sweetness and graciousness and womanliness are some of the characteristics of angels."

Darrel laughed outright, but, as the boat just then bumped against the dock, and the passengers were hastening out, no one knew of the remark that had occasioned it.

"You always were a curious sort of fellow, Ken! but this beats it all, out and out. Well, go in and win—if you can. That's my advice, for, of course, such a divine creature would not regard the very earthly fact of your salary being about half of her candy money."

If Kenneth had not known as he did Phil Darrel's way of talking, I think he would have been sorely tempted to knock him down. As it was, he only bit his lip under his mustache; nor did Darrel, as they crossed the gang-plank, note the steely flash of his eyes.

"I do wonder if I can arrange it now?"

Addie Trevelyn sat gazing thoughtfully at the pile of envelopes and paper on the desk before her.

A petite, graceful girl, whose soft blue eyes were shaded by heavy golden lashes, that matched in hue the long, wavy hair that was drawn plainly off the low, womanly forehead, and fastened with a narrow blue satin ribbon.

Her dainty, dimpled hands lay crossed before her, and over the exquisite wrist a narrow lace cuff lay, that matched the collar at her rounded throat.

She had about her a presence that suggested peacefulness and content; and yet Addie Trevelyn was as light-hearted and gay as a bird, as arch and piquant as a care-free child.

How had she been a sweet, happy life, whose undercurrent had flowed unobtrusively along, until—Kenneth Mortimer's hand had unsealed a fountain in her heart, of whose existence she never had been aware.

From the very first, Addie had been attracted by him—by the graveness and seriousness, the reverent courtesy he paid to her—and gradually, as their acquaintance progressed, she learned more and more of his fine disposition and noble character. And with increasing acquaintance came increasing love.

There, that was it, in plain terms; and it was of this that Addie was thinking as she sat beside her desk, with the sweet spring air blowing her luscious hair over her pink cheeks.

She was a sensible girl—very unlike a great many girls who are rich and who have poor lovers. She was sensible, first, because she could appreciate Kenneth Mortimer's good traits, and learned that he was not a fortune-hunter. And because, now that she loved him, and knew, by her delicate, womanly intuition, that she was very dear to him, now that she knew he would not ask her to share his lot, simply because hers was the greater, because all this, Addie Trevelyn displayed her sweet good sense in making a plain way to her heart for Kenneth Mortimer to walk in.

And the plan was this, and how her beautiful eyes sparkled as she wrote and addressed a note to Kenneth Mortimer, one of ten that she wrote before she left her desk—to make a select party of ten, and invite them to a fortnight's visit at her father's seat upon the Hudson.

Then, with a smile, as she stamped the delicate wafer, she said:

"I hope he will refuse!"

Outside, the rain was pouring in torrents, and driven wildly against the window of Kenneth Mortimer's office by the shrieking wind. By the broad banner of light streaming from the gas-jet, Kenneth and Philip Darrel, who were smoking in cosy quiet beside the crackling fire, ensconced in arm-chairs, could see the wet pavement and the occasional drenched pedestrians, as they hurried on to shelter.

It might have been the magnetic influence of the storm that made Kenneth so unusually quiet; at all events, whatever the cause, Phil had rallied him on it more than once that evening.

"I say, you are a perfect bear, Ken. What on earth do you mean by asking a fellow in to have a smoke, and then sit like a statue when he comes? 'Tisn't the old story, is it? you and Miss Addie haven't had a fall out, eh?"

If Kenneth moved uneasily in his chair, certainly Mr. Darrel showed his feelings on the subject by manifesting a decided embarrassment when he mentioned Addie Trevelyn's name; such a decided embarrassment, too, that Kenneth looked up in unfeigned amazement.

"I have had no falling out with Miss Addie, nor am I likely to have, although I will confess the cause of my 'bearishness' is my inability to accept her kind invitation up to Trevelyn Park next week."

Suddenly Phil's eyes brightened. "Aren't you going?" he returned, eagerly. "I thought surely you'd go. We'll have a fine time, I think."

It was Kenneth's turn now to look up in surprise.

"Are you going?" Phil laughed.

"Can't you trust me, Ken? But if I can win Addie Trevelyn—"

A half timid knock on the door interrupted him, and then a miserable little girl, dripping rain from her scant, short garments, entered partly through.

"If you please, sir—a penny—"

"Get out there, you nuisance! Put her out, Ken!"

Phil's rough words made the girl shrink back, but Kenneth indignantly silenced him.

"Are you not ashamed, and she a child! Put her out in this fearful storm! Come in, sissey, and get warm, if not dry."

Kenneth spoke kindly to the little shivering thing, and then Phil laughed, as if it was the funniest joke in the world.

"Kenneth Mortimer, you're an A 1 lunatic! Here you've been in New York all your life, and at the advanced age of twenty-eight, offer the hospitalities of your office to a little street beggar, whose mother is sick and whose father's dead, I'll bet a quarter—ain't they sis?"

Kenneth's lip curled.

"I have not lived long enough in New York, or anywhere else, to turn any creature out into such a tempest. She is welcome to the little comfort of a roof and warmth."

Phil carefully knocked the column of ashes from his cigar, with a dexterous move of his little finger.

"Ring for oysters and champagne. Hadn't you better, Ken?"

But Kenneth was listening to the voluble story the girl was pouring forth, and when she had done, handed her a dollar bill.

"That will take you home in a car, and give you a fire and supper, if no more. Now, run along, sis; I hear a car, and it holds up a little."

Out into the darkness she darted, and Kenneth turned with a white, worried face to Phil.

"What was it you said about Miss Trevelyn a few moments ago?"

He seemed to be scarce patient enough to wait for Philip Darrel's deliberate answer.

"Miss Trevelyn? Oh! that I should cultivate her acquaintance particularly, the fortnight I am in her father's house. Truth is, Ken, I'm in love with her, and if she'll have me, it's all right. I can balance her account at her banker's, I guess."

Kenneth's face was turned away, and his voice came dull and pain-laden for Phil's answer.

"If I could afford to lose the time, and spend the money, nothing would afford me greater bliss than to pass a fortnight in Addie Trevelyn's company. As I can't do this—ah, Phil, I foresee it all! You will win her, while I—oh! if she only knew how I love her!"

She knows it!"

And Addie Trevelyn's sweet voice, clear and low, sounded on their astonished ears, and Addie Trevelyn, her face all blushes, her eyes luminous, walked up to Kenneth and extended her hands, while at the door, half grave, half amused, stood her father.

"I know you love me, Kenneth, and I love you; and to-night you have proved by your charity to the beggar girl I persuaded to apply to you, and by your brave refusal to join my pleasure party, because you did not feel able to afford it, that you are both kind and prudent. And, Kenneth, because I have lent myself to this little scheme you will not turn me away—as Mr. Darrel would the beggar girl?"

"Turn you away! Miss Trevelyn—Addie—can it be true? Addie dearest!" and he stooped to whisper in her ear words too sacred for Philip Darrel's or her father's ear.

"Mr. Darrel," she said, after a moment, "let this be a lesson to you, that clarity and prudence go hand in hand with other good traits of character which, I am forced to admit, I can not discover in you. Kenneth, and Addie turned to him again, "don't let papa scold me, will you?"

But Mr. Trevelyn's face was too serious to suggest even a scolding.

"Addie's eccentric, I think—just a little, you know," he said to Kenneth, as he smoothed her sun-bright hair, "and I've spoiled her, I suppose."

"If other girls could only be so spoiled," he returned, as he caressed her hand; and Phil Darrel, finding he was decidedly *de trop*, got away, thinking what a remarkably good investment that dollar of Ken's was.

He didn't join the party at Trevelyn Park, and Kenneth Mortimer did, for *per se* Trevelyn suddenly discovered the immediate need, the pressing want of an architect to plan for the two new wings on the building. And as Mr. Mortimer was regarded universally as a rising young architect—why, it was the handiest thing in the world; or at least, Kenneth and Addie thought so, when, on those warm moonlight evenings they walked through the spacious grounds.

## The Beautiful Forger:

OR,  
THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GIRL.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLETT.

AUTHOR OF "MADAME'S MARRIAGE," ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE HACIENDA AND ITS INMATES.

SINCE the American conquest of California, the terms rancho and ranch have been applied to small farms, and sometimes in slang to single houses, tents, or to liquor shops. Formerly a rancho meant a tract of land appropriated for pasture, often four miles or more square, and sometimes much larger. A rancho was a man who owned or lived on one of these; and it was the pride of the Spanish Californian to wear that title. They were not generally possessed of much knowledge of agriculture or business; but they affected an absolute independence; and those who succeeded the original race in their possessions lived in the same style. The chief wealth was in lands and cattle. The herdsmen, often numerous on large

estates, were Indians and Mexicans, sometimes little above the savages, but usually faithful to their employers.

One of these large and well-cultivated estates was in excellent order, and would have attracted the admiration of casual travelers. An extensive corral—a part of all cattle ranches—was surrounded by a high and stout fence. The dwelling-house, of rambling architecture, was built partly of the unburned brick, and was strong enough to resist the assault of marauders. The grounds surrounding it were laid out with attention to artistic effect, and were fine specimens of ornamental horticulture.

Strange and beautiful evergreens, native to the gardens of Australia, were striking features. There was the malva tree, growing to the height of fifteen feet, and green all the year round, large crimson flowers mingling with its wealth of foliage. There was the mayo tree, also evergreen, a native of Chili, brilliant in the season with its profuse yellow flowers. The Australian bean, bearing flowers, too, in contrast with its compact, bright leaves, and other climbing and creeping plants, made a luxuriant drapery for walls and the facade, which was covered with faded frescoes. The honeysuckle and laurustinus added their contributions. Roses and verbenas were seen in clusters on the lawn. From the windows above, in front, and the veranda roof, this flowery picture might be seen; with the rocky meadows beyond, and the slope of hills on which sheep were feeding in scattered flocks.

The patio of a Mexican house is its proper front. This was paved with brick, and had a fountain with a tank in the center, over which exotic plants trailed their glossy leaves. Round three sides of the court ran a veranda; its floor of painted tiles a little above the level of the paved court; its roof supported by a row of *portales*; its windows, glazed, reaching to the ground. The house windows opened into this veranda.

The house was old-fashioned, spacious and irregular; but the dark, oak-paneled walls were hung with several fine paintings, and there was every necessary to household comfort in a large establishment.

In the reception-room on the ground floor were two persons; one a middle-aged gentleman in a silk dressing-gown, standing by the window, and the other a lady a few years older, seated in a leather easy-chair with a book in her hand. Her person was spare, and her face thin and deeply lined; her eyes were gray and deep-set; and her whole expression was severe and repellent. She wore a cap of ancient fashion, but exquisite neatness, and her dress of faded silk lay in undisturbed folds, as if used to slow movements.

She laid down her book, and took up some crochets, while speaking to the gentleman, who still stood by the window.

"What time did Stephen come back?" she asked, at length.

"This morning, early."

"And he could learn nothing?"

"I don't think he made any inquiries, or did any thing except to go to the house. It was closed, and not a soul was there."

"It is very strange. I have my suspicions—"

"You always have suspicions, Martelle," said the gentleman, turning round suddenly and facing the lady. His face was decidedly prepossessing. The features were grand in outline; the complexion was ruddy; the eyes were dark and melting with kindness; the mouth was firm and composed, but ready to curve into a smile that bespoke the truest benevolence.

"You are always fancying some harm to come; though what you apprehend in this instance I really can not imagine."

"The more stupid of you, David!" retorted the spinster, throwing a glance of scorn at her brother-in-law, for in such relation stood David Ormsley to Martelle De Lorme. "This girl whom Walter brought here—"

"Poor little thing! Is there any thing dangerous about her?"

"Not as you understand danger, perhaps, but—"

"How is she this morning? She looked last night like a devil."

"She will do well enough. I sent her breakfast to her room. I hope she will be able to leave us to-morrow."

"Where can she go? Her father is not at home, Stephen says."

"But the house is there, and she will do best at home."

"You are not hospitable, Martelle, to wish to send away the girl, especially when she has just escaped a terrible danger."

"She ought to have stayed at home. I don't like these wandering ladies, that always manage to pick up handsome young men as deliverers and escorts."

"How silly you are, Martelle! Walter and Stephen, riding through the woods, heard a woman's screams, and were just in time to save the girl from a brutal murderer. What could Walter do? Leave her to be killed by the monster who had carried her off? He did right to bring her here."

"And how long is she to stay?"

"Till her father is found, and her nurse."

"And till your son falls desperately in love with her."

"He has had no chance to do that yet," said the gentleman, smiling. "She has been ill ever since she came."

"She is very pretty, and the ride here together was enough for so susceptible a young gentleman. He has been asking after her health with a wonderful deal of tenderness."

"Martelle, you need not be overcautious; my son will take care of himself. Where is he now?"

"Gone on an errand for the girl. While Stephen went to see if her father was at home, Walter must needs ride off to the place in the forest where he found her first, to look for a trumphy locket she had lost from her neck when she was struggling to escape. The young man is bewitched!"

"Tell him to come to me in the library when he comes home."

"And the girl—can not Stephen take her in the wagon to her father's house?"

"No; she must remain here till she wishes to go; and then I will take her myself."

"Very well, I will take care Walter has no chance of a talk with her," murmured the lady; and rising, she went out to give some directions to the servants.

Walter Ormsley would have gone to the pit in the forest without the excuse of a search for the lockets; for he felt some anxiety about the half-breed, whom he had thrust into the hole and covered with loose earth. It would have been no joke to him if the result had been fatal. But he soon found he had no cause for uneasiness. The victim had speedily and surely scratched his way to the surface. Half the earth was out of the pit and scattered in every direction; and the villain had disappeared.

Walter looked around for him, and seeing no one, followed the well-marked trail through the woods till he came to the lodge already described.

This was, no doubt, he thought, the place described by the young lady he had rescued.

The door was slightly fastened; but it was an easy matter to get in. There were traces of recent occupancy. A fire smoldered in the

narrow fireplace, and there were fragments of meat and corn-bread in the saucepan on the hearth. Some one had slept and breakfasted. The furniture was somewhat in disorder. As the young man lifted the buffalo-robe from the rude couch, something hard fell to the floor. It was the lockets, the link of which had broken loosening it from the ribbon worn by Helen. Knowing that it must be hers, he put it carefully in his pocket-book.

He did not see the evil eyes peering at him through a knot-hole in one of the boards enclosing the lodge. He did not see the muzzle of a gun inserted in the hole—and pointed directly at him; then withdrawn, with a muttered, "Not yet!" from the savage creature who held the weapon.

All was silence when the young gentleman had finished his survey. Satisfied that all was right, young Ormsley left the cabin, and retraced his path to where he had left his horse. He sung a lively air as he went, for his heart was light within him, and he imagined the sweet surprise of the lovely maiden who owed him her life, when he should restore to her the treasured trinket she had lost.

Martelle was right in her supposition. Helen's enchanting face, the image of a pure and upright soul, had made a deep impression on the young man's heart; and the sad circumstances in which she was placed—helpless, friendless, and dependent on the care of his father and aunt—only added to the interest surrounding her.

Close on his trail, as he rode homeward, but out of sight except at intervals, followed Ulric, who had secured his own horse. All the evil passions of his nature were stirred within him, and he burned for revenge. His passion for the young girl he had deceived from home, his ambition to elevate himself by a marriage with her, were active as ever; and he saw in this young man a possible rival. How he hated him as he rode carelessly on, rousing the woodland echoes with his song. He was vexed that he had not shot him in the lodge. He would have done so but for fear of discovery and punishment. Twice he urged his horse within gunshot, and leveled his weapon; but each time concluded it was safest to try no such desperate game. It would be an ugly thing to be apprehended, condemned and executed. Ulric had once seen a man hung; and the very thought made him shudder. In those days, when the country was sparsely populated, the chances of escape were small for the perpetrator of such a crime.

When Walter Ormsley arrived at home, he found the family waiting dinner for him. Helen sat in the parlor beside his aunt. She looked very pale; but the young man was fairly startled by her loveliness. The expression of his face, as he stood gazing upon her in involuntary admiration, was not lost upon Martelle, and she glanced at her brother-in-law; but he did not notice it.

As Walter handed the lockets to the young girl, her eyes flashed joyously, and the bright color flew to her cheeks. She burst into rapturous thanks. The young man told her where he had found it.

"It must have been broken," she said, "when I threw myself upon the couch. I was so tired, and frightened besides."

"Will you let me see it?" asked the spinster, holding out her hand. Helen gave her the lockets.

She touched the spring, and the miniature was disclosed.

The lady uttered a cry of surprise.

"Whose face is this?" she demanded, sharply. "Where did you get this picture?"

Helen remembered that her father had told her its history as a secret. She could not reveal it without his permission.

"My father gave it to me," she said, simply. "Where did he know—There is something very strange in this! Very strange."

He seemed struck by it, too. Walter had never seen any one whom it resembled.

"Did you ever know any one who was like this portrait?" Helen asked, at length, timidly, addressing her question to Mr. Ormsley.

"Yes—I did know a lady—many years ago; but it was not in this country," he replied.

"Where—was she?" asked the girl.

Martelle answered for him.

"She died long ago."

"She is dead?" exclaimed Helen, growing suddenly pale.

"Certainly; you heard me say so," replied the spinster. "Why should her death affect you, child? You never saw her; you could not, indeed; for she died before you were old enough."

How intently the girl listened for more! At last she said:

"When I find my dear father, I will ask him to tell you all about it. I know he wanted to find the lady whose picture is here."

"But he can not find her, child."

"Oh, if I could only see my father!" wailed the poor girl.

Walter was gazing at her with the deepest interest.

"He shall soon be found, Miss Helen," he said, "and I shall take you to him."

"If I could go myself," said Helen, "I could find Margaret, I know. She would not have left the house, unless she had news of papa. Oh, may I go to-morrow?"

Mr. Ormsley hesitated; but Martelle whispered:

"You shall go, my dear; I promise you that you shall!"

And the grateful look the girl gave her reassured her somewhat as to the safety of her nephew's heart.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

AFTER the lamps were lighted the same evening, the family was assembled in the parlor, discussing a squirrel-hunt to come off on the following day. The two gentlemen urged Helen to give up her project of going away, and join in the sport. The inhumanity of hunting the little animals from their cover in the woods, made the idea painful to her, and she declared that she would not witness such cruelty, even had she nothing to call her away. But in truth she was anxious to be at home again.

"If you will wait one day for me, Helen," said the elder Ormsley, "I will take you myself. You are not strong enough to ride."

Walter was eager to have her stay. His aunt watched him jealously. In the end Helen yielded to their entreaties; saying she could not put off going more than one day on any account.

The evening passed in agreeable conversation. Walter never left the side of the lovely girl he had rescued. The aunt's efforts to separate them were fruitless. While they were bending together over some drawings, the spinster whispered to her brother:

"You see how it is, David! Now will you call me a croaker?"

"I see, Martelle, that the young people appear to like each other. We can not help that. We were young once ourselves."

"How stupid you are!"

"Have you forgot that time, Martelle? I have not."

"And would you let Walter marry a girl without money or family?"

"I know nothing about her, nor you, either."

"The more reason your son should not be thrown in her way. She has fascinated him already."

"By very natural witchcraft. She is a lovely and artless creature, and I am half in love with her myself."

"David, you are a fool!"

"But, Martelle, I want to know one thing. Was that picture in the lockets really taken for Sylvia?"

"It looks very much like it."

"But Sylvia was never married. She could not have been the girl's mother."

"There is a mystery about it. You see how she faltered in her answers. I hate mysteries; they always cover something wrong."

"I can learn every thing from the girl's father, I suppose."

"Perhaps so, if he has nothing to conceal. I must confess I do not like the looks of things; and least of all, Walter's infatuation."

"You must let him alone, Martelle; he will take care of himself. Parents can not interfere with love affairs here as they do in the old country."

But Helen, happily ignorant of the anxiety felt lest she should steal away the heart of her host's son, enjoyed his conversation without a drawback. She had never met a young man so cultivated, so eloquent, so interesting. Her heart warmed to him as she remembered the service he had rendered her; her color rose as she caught his looks fixed upon her face with unmistakable admiration. What tender brown eyes he had! but she could not meet them without confusion.

The hours seemed to have passed very swiftly, when the servant brought in a tray of candles, and Miss De Lorme, taking Helen's arm, led her from the parlor to her own room. The spinster's face said unutterable things; but she shut her mouth firmly, resolved to have free speech on the morrow.

While Helen sunk to sleep in her luxurious chamber, her vigilant enemy was plotting mischief. Ulric had prowled all the afternoon in the vicinity, going round and round the house, and examining every part of the walls and fences. He was master of the art of reconnoitering, and had already conceived a daring scheme. As he revolved it, he laughed hoarsely, thinking of his triumph over the young man who had so treated him, and the anticipation of revenge was sweet.

The night was intensely dark, but the grounds were lighted by gleams from the windows of different outhouses. Ulric had carefully marked out his route in the rapid retreat that might become necessary, when he was burdened, too, with the prisoner he intended to carry off. He had broken off some boards from the garden fence and placed them so that he could easily push them aside.

As he crept along under the clumps of bushes, he saw one of the female domestics carrying a lamp. She had just come from the smoke-house, and was going into the kitchen. The half-breed saw the importance of his getting into the house without causing an alarm. He followed closely, and, as a chance favored him, just at the kitchen door a gust extinguished the light. He lost not an instant in slipping through the open door after the girl, and in hiding behind a screen that stood on one side of the fireplace.

The girl relighted her lamp, and then hung a large key on the wall. Ulric conjectured that it was the key of the smoke-house, and thought that would be a good hiding-place in the event of pursuit. After a while the girl left the kitchen, taking the light with her.

The intruder waited till the house was perfectly silent before he ventured to stir. Then he crept out softly, took up a candle and lighted it by a coal from the fireplace. He went out of the kitchen, taking the key from the wall, and passed into the wide entrance hall. Here he softly undrew the bolts from the front door and unlatched it; he had determined to go out this way. Then he noiselessly ascended the stairs.

He stopped before a door under which he saw a light, uncertain which was the chamber he sought, and listened at the keyhole. He heard a soft voice within—Helen's voice! She was speaking to the maid who waited on her.

Presently all was still; but the enemy dared not leave his lurking-place till he was sure the inmates of the house were asleep. How he cursed the delay! But it was necessary.

The maid evidently slept in an adjoining room, for he heard her loud breathing. All was dark in Helen's apartment; the candle he had brought was burned low, and gave a feeble light. Now was his time!

He opened the door cautiously; it was not locked; if it had been, he had come prepared with a skeleton key adapted to locks of almost every kind.

Helen's bed stood on the opposite side of the room; the light muslin curtains drawn back; and she was lying in profound slumber. How beautiful she looked! Her golden brown hair, escaping in rich curls straggled over the pillow; her cheek rested on one hand; the other, like a dimpled snowdrift, lay on the crimson silk coverlet. A gentle smile was on her lips, as if she were dreaming of joy.

The enemy did not stop to feast his eyes on the beauty of his intended prey. He glanced once at the open door of the next chamber, where he heard the maid still breathing heavily. Then he crept to the bed, stooped, and passed one arm under the form of the sleeping girl,

the house! What would happen next? The creature might come back and set fire to the building, in hopes to carry off the girl in the confusion. Their lives were all in danger.

Ormsley laughed at her fears; but he was not sorry to be relieved of the responsibility of sheltering a young girl from the machinations of evil men. She would be safest at home; and he was resolved to take her there, and to see her father.

So, the next morning, in spite of Walter's remonstrances, Stephen was ordered to get up the carriage. Helen took leave of her friends, and gladly took her seat, looking forward with hope that all would be well.

## CHAPTER XV.

NOT LOST BUT FOUND.

DR. MERLE was so much improved after a night's rest that he was able to prescribe for himself. He refused to be taken from his own house till he was strong enough to undertake a journey; for he was resolved to go in search of his daughter. Margaret encouraged him with energy; for she was not only burning with anxiety herself, but she knew it was a perilous thing for him to lie quiet at home and think of the poor girl in the power of that monster, Uric Boyce.

With the remnant of her savings she hired a rude one-horse wagon, in which she placed a mattress of straw for the invalid, and a basket filled with provisions and dried fruits. As soon as her master felt himself well enough to bear the fatigue, in spite of the remonstrances of the village medico or practitioner, the two set out, guided by the inquiries made along the road, on the track of the deceiver and the young lady.

Helen and her attendant were both too remarkable in appearance to escape the observation of the country people; nor had the half-breed taken any pains to conceal his route, supposing that his designs would be successfully accomplished long before any pursuit would be made. So that Margaret had little difficulty in tracing the road taken.

Their progress was indeed extremely slow, for a heavy load could not be driven rapidly with a horse, and the frequent stoppages necessary took up a great deal of time. It was not until the third day that they reached the log farm-house where Helen had been so hospitably entertained for the night.

Here they heard a glowing account of the poor deceived girl and her anticipations of soon meeting her dearly loved father. Margaret shed bitter tears at the recital. She gave a narrative of the real facts, and the old farmer brought in a neighbor, who had met the pair several miles further on their journey, and gave such information as enabled them to conjecture with some degree of certainty the direction they had taken.

Thus it happened that on Helen's arrival at her home, accompanied by David Ormsley, she found it utterly deserted. Her inquiries in the *rancheria* only elicited the fact that the doctor and his housekeeper had gone in search of her. The disappointment was crushing. It was difficult for her friend, Mr. Ormsley, to prevent her from sinking into the abandonment of despair. She could not rally sufficiently to think what was next to be done.

Her friend proposed that she should remain quietly with some one in the *rancheria*, while he attended to a little business to be transacted, that would detain him but a day or two. Then he would see her again, and if she had heard nothing he would return home and take measures for such a search as would bring her father back.

Ormsley would have been glad to have the young girl return with him to his house, but she preferred remaining, to be in the way of receiving any communication; and she placed herself under the care of the good housekeeper, Margaret's friend.

Meanwhile the doctor and Margaret pursued their route; the woman showing the instinct of a sleuth-hound, or an Indian in discovering the trail. Slight indications that would have escaped an experienced traveler sufficed for her.

They came upon the dead old man in the slant, and managed to make him understand them. His astonishment on learning the truth about the young girl and her attendant, was so great, that he proffered his assistance in tracing their further route, and rendered most valuable help. He followed the horses' path into the forest; and when they came to the spot where Uric had left the animals, Margaret, with a cry of joy, pointed to his footprints in the moist soil. He wore a peculiar shoe on one foot, different from the other; his footprints could be unmistakably recognized.

Margaret's heart beat high as they followed the track. At last they reached the lodge; and here they could doubt no longer. One of the blankets had been brought from Dr. Merle's house, and some other small articles of furniture were familiar to the housekeeper.

Dr. Merle picked up from the rude couch a fine linen handkerchief, with initials delicately embroidered in one corner. It was one of Helen's. As he recognized it, he covered his face with his hands, and sunk to the ground with a deep groan.

Margaret strove with all her might to encourage him; and they lost no time in prosecuting the search. The footprints were well marked—both going and returning—that led deeper into the woods. The dead old man accompanied them, shaking his head slowly, and muttering as he went.

They stood at length by the steep, moss-grown rock already mentioned, and a shiver of horror pervaded the frame of the startled doctor, as his eyes fell on the pit so recently filled up—so like a new-made grave. He was unable to speak. He could only bury himself on his knees, and hide his face upon the damp earth.

Margaret, too, was petrified; the same thought occurred to her, that her young mistress had been killed and buried there hastily. All the ground around bore the marks of a severe struggle. She gave a heartbroken shriek, threw herself down by the doctor, and mingled her sobs with the groans that burst from his heart.

But the dead old man had a different idea. He seized the shovel that still lay on the ground, pulled the woman aside, and motioned her to remove her master.

"The money! The money!" he kept repeating. She comprehended him and went vigorously to work to help him. In a few moments the loose earth was all thrown out of the pit. It was plain that no one was buried there; and it was now evident to all that the hole had been dug to conceal the money. The running water had burst in; the reason was obvious why the hiding-place had been abandoned. Eagerly Margaret explained this to her master, and their hopes rose high at once.

If the half-breed had not intended to remain in the neighborhood, he would not have attempted to bury the gold. If they could discover its place of concealment, they would have only to lie in wait for the thief.

Dr. Merle was utterly exhausted. Margaret made a seat for him against a tree and spread her cloak over it. Then she persuaded him to sit down and try to rest.

Their old companion, in the meantime, had been carefully examining the ground with his

stick, and scraping away the dry leaves. The woman assisted him with eager scrutiny. Every now and then she would point to the print of Uric's foot in the soil.

Thus examining every foot of ground, they rounded the perpendicular rock. Just on the other side was a mound of leaves, which Margaret would have passed without notice. But the dead old man pounced on it with his stick, which he ran down into the earth, finding less resistance than in the other spots he had tried. He began to restitute wildly for the spade.

When the leaves were swept off, it was seen that the earth had been freshly heaped up. The eager woman herself threw it out by shovelfuls. She dug so deep that her arms ached, and the sweat rolled from her face. It was impossible, she thought; her search was vain. The old man plunged down his stick; it struck something hard; and Margaret gave a wild cry of victory.

She dug till the box was visible, and then scratched away the earth with her hands. Presently she could get one of her hands under the box, and seizing the handle with the other, she lifted it out.

The old man received it, and, helping her out, commenced filling up the hole as fast as he could. In this task, too, Margaret assisted him; and in heaping on the leaves; for she saw how important it was to conceal their discovery.

There stood the box, bearing Dr. Merle's name in small white letters on one end; and now they must repair with it to a place of security. Afterward they could search for the robber. For the latter undertaking they must have assistance.

With the help of the honest old man, Margaret carried the box to the tree, against which she had left her master reclining. In joyous accents she announced that she had found the stolen treasure.

He made no reply. He could not be aroused by any of her efforts. It was plain that another paroxysm of his disease had overtaken him. What was to be done?

Margaret dared not send for assistance, remaining alone; she dared not leave her master. There was nothing to be done but carry him in her own arms to some place out of the wood, or some wayside cabin, where he could be left till she brought the wagon for him.

The lodge was out of the question—it would be rushing into the very jaws of the wolf. Uric was safe to return before long; and who, then, could watch and follow him to the lair where, doubtless, he had taken his young mistress?

The faithful woman had no one to consult with in her sore strait. She could only pray for guidance and deliverance.

Only a few minutes had passed, when they heard voices at a little distance in the woods. Quickly snatching up her cloak, Margaret threw it over the box, and motioned to the dead old man to sit upon it. Then she ran in the direction of the voices, which sounded already as if receding.

She caught sight of a woodman, carrying an ax on his shoulder. A man in a herdsman's dress was talking with him.

She called to them for help. Both stopped, listened, and then came toward her.

She begged assistance for a sick gentleman, who had been suddenly taken ill. His horse and wagon had been left not far off. Would they go with her to take him to the place? she was unable to carry him, and afraid to leave him.

The faces of the two men were honest; she did not hesitate to trust them. They turned back with her. When they came to where her master was sitting, she begged them to take him up. She herself determined to carry the box, still covered by her cloak.

The woodman cut down several stout saplings, and in a few moments, by the aid of a bunch of twine from his pocket, a rude litter was constructed. They lifted the insensible man, and laid him tenderly upon it.

"Where do you wish to go?" one of them asked.

"Our wagon is just out of the woods—that way, but I want to drive it to some house where we can find a safe shelter. This gentleman has been robbed; and we have traced the thief; we shall have to find him and take him, before we can get back what we have lost."

One of the men stepped forward.

"Is this Dr. Merle?" he asked, pointing to the form on the litter.

"It is, sir. Do you know him?" asked Margaret, not without apprehension.

"No; but we are in search of him. I am sent for that purpose; I have been scouring the country for news of him."

"Oh, sir, what sent you?"

"Mr. David Ormsley. I am his servant."

"And he—how did he know?"

"Dr. Merle's daughter was at our house."

"Dr. Merle's daughter!" echoed Margaret, with a cry of joy. "Where is she? Oh, tell me quickly."

"She was at our house. Mr. Walter and I brought her from this very piece of woods the night that horrid savage tried to murder her."

Eager questions followed; and presently Margaret had the whole story.

"And she is now at your house?"

"No; she insisted on going home. Mr. Ormsley took her there; but found that Dr. Merle had gone in search of her with her nurse, and he came back and sent out men in every direction to look for him, and tell him his daughter was found."

The good woman clasped her hands in thankfulness. She knelt by the litter and whispered the good news in the ear of her unconscious master. Helen was in safety! Stephen assured her that she was in the *rancheria*, under the care of the *alcalde*, with the judge's good housekeeper, whom she knew to be faithful!

The men took up the litter, and the old man helped Margaret to carry the box. They regained their wagon, and then Stephen pressed on them his master's orders, if he found the object of his search to bring him to Ormsley's own house.

It was thought best to accept this hospitable invitation. Margaret gave her store of silver to the dead old man, and Stephen, having thanked the wood-cutter for his help, mounted his horse and rode alongside the wagon.

Thus it happened that Dr. Merle became a guest at the house to which Helen had been taken after her rescue. Margaret accompanied him, resolved to seek her young mistress as soon as she could leave him.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 155.)

Rock Mountain Rob,  
THE CALIFORNIA OUTLAW;  
OR,  
The Vigilantes of Humbug Bar.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,  
AUTHOR OF THE "WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND KIT,"  
"RED MAZEPPA," "ACE OF SPADES," "HEART  
OF FIRE," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK,"  
"A STRANGE GIRL," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.  
FACE TO FACE.

AND while the second outlaw was urging the first to retreat, and he, ruefully regarding his bleeding hand, was calling down curses upon the head of the ambushed marksman, Talbot's voice rung out clear upon the air:

"There's only two left, boys, and one of them's wounded, so steady; Jim and Bill take 'em in the flank, and keep 'em in the mountain; up and at 'em!" and then Talbot yelled like a demon.

"Blazes! there's an army of them!" cried one of the outlaws, and then the two dashed backward over the rocks and through the bushes, going up the canyon like hunted antelope.

The stranger in the bushes sent half a dozen shots after them with his repeating rifle as fast as he could fire. He understood the stratagem. The road-agents, running for their lives up the canyon, were completely convinced that, in place of one man, they had really been confronting with a dozen.

The noise made by the outlaws crashing through the bush had hardly died away when Talbot stepped forth from his place of concealment in the mouth of the smaller canyon. He was curious to see the man who had given the desperate outlaws such a terrible lesson.

Dick had hardly gained the center of the opening, when, from the bushes by the Indian trail, came a young man, leading a coal-black horse of wondrous beauty. In his hand he carried a rifle which he had done such deadly execution on the persons of the outlaws.

Talbot and the stranger met in the center of the open space, and there was a mutual start of surprise. Each recognized the other.

The horseman was the man who, at the Waterproof saloon, in answer to Colonel Jacks, had stated that his name was John Rimee.

Hardly had the young man caught sight of Talbot's face, when he dropped the reins of the horse which he was leading, cocked the Spencer, and brought it half up on a line with Dick's breast.

Talbot, ten paces from the stranger, stirred not at the menacing motion, and moved neither hand nor foot to stay the threatened attack. He only surveyed the stranger in wonder, and, holding in his hand the knotted stick, he leaped calmly upon it.

A moment in silence the stranger covered Talbot with the muzzle of his rifle; there was a nervous tremor in his hand, a finger of which was pressed upon the trigger, but the pressure which would have sent the rifle-ball to Dick's heart was wanting.

"You are Dick Talbot?" the stranger said, slowly, and there was a strange nervousness in his manner.

"Yes, I am Dick Talbot," the threatened man replied, as cool and unconcerned as if he had not spent the entire night in perilous adventures, and now, at the very moment of apparent rescue, had not encountered another danger as terrible as any of those through which he had just passed.

"Do you not deny your name?"

"No, why should I?"

"And yet there is danger in owning that you are Dick Talbot."

"I can't help it," Dick replied, coolly; "it would be of little use to deny my identity to you, and if my time has come, I might as well die with the truth on my lips as with a lie there."

Doubt and irresolution were plainly written on the stranger's face. It was evident that a struggle was going on in his breast.

"Do you remember me?" he asked, after quite a long pause.

"Oh, yes," Talbot replied, with perfect unconcern. "I met you about a year ago at Barren Camp, on the Salmon river. Some hasty gentlemen were about to string me up without judge or jury, when you interfered and saved my life."

"Do you remember what I said to you then?"

"Perfectly; you told me that you bore me a deadly hatred; that you were hunting me down for the express purpose of killing me."

"I saved your life, then," the stranger said, slowly.

"Yes, but as you were kind enough to inform me you saved me, that you might have the pleasure of killing me yourself."

"You remember that I gave you one year to live."

"Yes, but I have exceeded that time by a month at least."

"Thank accident for that," Rimee said, quickly. "I tracked you to Bannock city; but for your abrupt departure for the mountains, you would not have outlived the year more than a week."

"But now, my young friend, you've got me foul, haven't you?" and Dick really smiled in face of his foe.

Rimee's brow grew dark, and his eyes flashed as he noticed the smile upon Talbot's face. The hands which held the rifle trembled; the smile invited him, and yet he did not fire.

"It does not seem to trouble you much," Rimee said, with bitter accent.

"Why should it?" Dick asked, contemptuously.

"Is not life valuable to you?"

"What have I to live for?" Talbot questioned in return.

Rimee shook his head.

"How should I know? I can only say that life has charms to every man, no matter what may be his lot in life."

"That is not always true," Talbot said, slowly and sadly. "Some men live too long; they outlive all that makes life happy, and then death is a blessing, not a curse."

"Are you such a man?"

"No; I am nothing," Talbot replied, carelessly. "I am so old a gambler—have played so often with my life, as with my gold-dust, that I think as little of losing the one as I do the other. When my time comes I am ready to go."

"No ties then to bind you to the world?"

"Not a solitary tie."

"No woman that you love, and who will mourn for you?"

"No; two women in my life have loved me. One I got, the other I did not care for. The first is dead, the second, in the East, has learned to love another man who will make her a far happier woman than I could ever have done."

"One love only in your life?"

"One true love only," Talbot answered, smiling. "I have loved other women for a time, and then forgotten them, as they have forgotten me."

"You are right," Rimee said, slowly and with a sigh; "women are very worthless creatures." Talbot's keen eyes were fixed intently on the

face of the young man; what he read there brought first a look of astonishment, and then a shrewd smile.

"You are yet but a boy in years—too young to make such a sweeping assertion. Why, the down of your mustache is just appearing on your lip."

A shade of annoyance passed rapidly over the face of the young man. It was evident that something in Talbot's speech had offended him.

"I think that I have guessed why you seek my life," Talbot continued, slowly, his keen eyes still fixed upon the expressive face before him, and reading in that face the thoughts passing in the young man's mind as plainly as though they had been translated into words.

"Well?"

"I have taken away some fair maiden, that you coveted."

The look of utter disgust which flashed rapidly across the face of the young man was proof positive to Talbot that his guess was right.

"Never mind the reason; suffice it that I have sworn to kill you," Rimee said, hastily.

"Why on earth don't you do it, then?" asked Dick, impatiently. "Here, for a good ten minutes you've kept your rifle leveled at my breast, playing with me as the cat plays with the mouse. You can't possibly miss me at this distance, for you can handle the rifle equal to a squirrel hunter, as the dead men yonder can testify, could they speak?"

"Did you give the warning which stopped me on the edge of this place?" Rimee asked, suddenly.

Talbot simply nodded.

"You saved me from death then, for I dreamed not that danger was near, and should have fallen an easy prey."

"Yes, that's true; a single foot beyond the cover and you would have been a dead man. What a pity I stopped you!" Talbot said, reflectively. "If I had only known who it was, I could have let you come on; the outlaws would have picked you off, and I should have had one foe the less."

"And you would have let me go blindly to my death?"

"Of course!" and Dick looked smilingly into the face of the other.

"I do not believe it!" Rimee cried, and he dropped the butt of the rifle to the ground. "You have saved my life, and I'll not raise a finger against you."

"You will not seek my life, then?"

"At the present, no; in the future, yes. So be on your guard. I saved your life in Barren camp; you have returned the favor to-day, and now we are even. Arm yourself, for the next time we meet, one of us must die!"

Then Rimee swung himself into the saddle and galloped off, taking the road back to the valley.

CHAPTER XXIII.  
"GOING" FOR THE PRIZE.

TALBOT looked after the young stranger, a quiet smile upon his face.

"What in the world have I done to this young man or to friends of his, that he should hate me so bitterly?" he asked, as he listened to the rapidly-receding sound of the horse's hoofs striking upon the rocky trail.

Talbot had asked a question which he could not answer.

And then it suddenly occurred to him that the horseman, instead of proceeding on his journey, had actually turned squarely around and retraced his way back to the valley.

"Hang me if I can understand it at all," he muttered.

By this time the sun was high in the heavens and its warm beams were particularly agreeable to Talbot, whose heavy woolen garments were yet wet from his passage through the water.

Then Talbot turned his attention to the dead outlaws.

"To the victor belong the spoils!" he cried. "It is an old adage," and then Dick quietly possessed himself of their revolvers, and from the belt of the giant took the keen-edged bowie-knife.

"Remingtons, and in capital order, too," Talbot murmured, as he examined the revolvers. Then from the outlaws' pockets he supplied himself with cartridges.

Removing the masks from their faces, he examined their features. Both were strangers to him.

"The vultures will make short work of them," Talbot muttered, as he turned away. "I had better be making tracks; the comrades of these handsome gentlemen may take it into their heads to return with reinforcements, and I think that I've had about all the excitement that my health demands for the present."

Then Talbot left the open space, entered upon the Indian trail, and traversed it with rapid steps.

At the expiration of half an hour, he entered upon the Humbug Valley. A mile or so beyond lay the Bar.

As Talbot came into the town, he saw the slant of the fortune-teller. The thought of her prediction came instantly to his mind.

"It was a narrow squeeze," he said, with a laugh, "but the road-agents couldn't keep me, and I have an idea, too, that this young stranger won't get another chance at me in a hurry. After the warning I have received, I should be fully justified in 'hunting' this stranger and ending the struggle at a single blow. I would do so, perhaps, in any other case but this, but the suspicion that haunts me must either be verified or disproved before I take action. I must take an early opportunity to do so."

This fair oracle of fortune again, I have an idea that she can give me some valuable information, and without knowing it, too," and Dick laughed merrily as he proceeded onward.

As he came round the corner of the road into the main street of the Bar, he discovered the Indian, Mad Turtle, seated upon a boulder by the roadside, smoking a short pipe.

"Me glad," said the Indian, as Dick approached. Then the chief surveyed Dick curiously. "Heap fight, wildcat?" he asked, noticing the scratches upon Talbot's hands and the rents in his coat.

"No; the road-agents."

The Indian then arose, and Talbot related his adventures during the night. The chief listened attentively, and his keen black eyes sparkled when he learned the secret of the outlaws' retreat in the mountains.

"Make heap dollars, maybe—some time—bimeby," he said, briefly.

But what were you doing here on this stone?" Dick asked.

"No find white brother, big Injun sit down—wait for white brother to come back. Chief want white brother now."

"What do you want me for?"

"Big chief got squaw now."

"Squaw!" ejaculated Talbot, in astonishment. "I was not aware there were any Indians in the valley."

"No Injun!" said the chief, loftily. "O-wa-he, Blackfoot chief, no want Injun squaw—got two now—played out—give 'em to white brother—squaw he take 'em, quick. Chief got white squaw now."

"A white squaw!" exclaimed Talbot, in amazement, for he was well aware that white

women were few and far between in the Wisdom Valley.

"Yes, nice white squaw—good 'nuff to eat," said the chief, evidently highly impressed with the value of the prize he had captured.

"Who is she?"

"Daughter, white chief, barefooted-on-top-of-head—keeps hash-house, you bet," replied the Indian, with stolid dignity.

"What, Bessie Shook?" cried Talbot, in astonishment.

"Chief win her—play poker with old white father, get dead wood on him. Mud Turtle no fool Injun—play poker, heap," and the chief looked sagacious.

"Well, how does the young lady like it?" Dick inquired, not able to comprehend the truth, and believing that the Indian had made some strange mistake.

"Chief no see squaw yet—he wait for white brother to come back. 'Spose white brother go with Injun, he take squaw now—right away—putty soon," the Blackfoot said, drawing his blanket tighter around him, preparatory to setting out.

Talbot couldn't understand it in the least; the savage was so positive in his assertion that he was fairly staggered.

"Well—'spose go now?" the Indian said, impatiently.

"All right; go ahead," Dick said.

Talbot thought that it was best to let the Indian have his own way, knowing that as soon as they reached the saloon the explanation would come.

The two proceeded at once straight to the Waterproof saloon.

As Talbot and the Indian approached the place, they were perceived, and quite a little crowd gathered in the doorway.

The joke had been too rich for Bob Shook and Johnny Bird to keep, and all Humbug Bar had roared over the recital of how old Pop Shook had played poker with the Indian, Mud Turtle. And, as a natural consequence, every visitor to the saloon, after the story got about, made it a point to ask old Pop if he'd played any poker lately, and how much four kings and an ace were worth at the bottom of the pack.

And the result had been that the old man had sworn worse than a mule-teamster, and threatened to shoot on sight the next man who dared to say poker to him.

Great, therefore, was the excitement when a stalwart miner rushed into the saloon and yelled out:

"Pop, hyer's the Injun comin' for the gal!"

CHAPTER XXIV.  
CORNERING SHOOK.

OLD SHOOK looked any thing but pleased when he saw the Indian and Talbot approaching. Of course he guessed at once that the savage had come to claim the prize that he had fairly won, and how to get out of the scrape Shook knew not.

The inmates of the saloon were hugely pleased as they beheld old Shook's troubled face; they anticipated a rich scene.

The Indian and Talbot entered the door. A sudden silence came over the noisy crowd as the warrior strode across the floor and faced the old man behind the bar.

"How?" said the Indian, laconically.

Old Shook took no notice whatever of the chief, but pretended to be very busy wiping a tumbler.

A single look at Bob's demure face ought to have told old Shook that mischief was brewing, but he didn't have the slightest suspicion.

"That's all co-rect, an' we kin settle the hull thing in two shakes of a lamb's tail," the old man said, complacently.

"You played poker with the chief, and put me up as a stake?" Bessie said.

"Yes."

"And the Indian won fairly?"

"Well, yes, I s'pose he did," Shook said, twofully, and the bystanders roared at the expression upon the old man's face.

"If he won, that settles the matter, of course, and I must go with him."

If a thunderbolt had crashed in the roof of the Waterpof saloon at that moment, it could not have astonished the old man more than the girl's announcement.

"What?" yelled the old man in a rage.

The Indian looked delighted, while the miners gave themselves up to unrestrained merriment.

"Oh, you infernal scoundrel!" roared Shook, shaking his fist at the redoubtable Bob, who was in the face trying to suppress his laughter; "you've done this?"

And then the crowd roared again.

The Indian was a little astonished at the uproarious mirth. The case had been decided in his favor, and he could see no reason for the unseemly merriment.

"When squaw ready, chief ready, too," he said.

It was evident to all that the chief was in sober earnest. He did not take it as a joke at all.

Bessie looked puzzled for a moment. She did not wish to offend the chief if she could help it; then she thought of a way out of the dilemma.

"Am I to go with you, chief?" she asked.

The Indian gravely nodded assent.

"But where?"

"Home of Blackfoot chief—Muscle-shell river," he replied.

"Oh, but I can't go there, chief," she said, with a winning smile. "I can't not go to the wilderness. I must have a nice house like this to live in."

A grave look came over the face of the Indian. He began to see that he was not going to get the squaw after all.

"Chief's lodge is big—buffalo-skins; no house to give white squaw," he said, slowly.

"And, chief, if I marry you, you must become a Christian."

This settled the Indian's doubting mind.

"Be Christian?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Like white father?" and he pointed to Shook.

"Yes."

"Ugh! Injun be Christian like white father; next time he play poker, he say, mountain all mine, stake 'um. He lose, he no give mountain. He say, go take him away. Mountain no go, he no pay. When Injun lose, Injun pay. He no be Christian—he honest man—no cheat."

Gravely the Indian delivered his sweeping accusation.

"The Injun's right," the miners muttered among themselves.

"Say, old man, I kin fix the thing up," Johny Bird cried, rising. "S'pose you pay the Injun so many ounces of gold-dust for to call the thing square?"

"Injun no get squaw, he take dust," said the chief, willing to compromise the matter.

"And the white squaw will be the chief's sister," said Bessie, withdrawing from the room.

And so the famous poker case was settled. After a great deal of haggling, the number of ounces was agreed upon, and Old Shook paid them over to the Indian.

But a sigh came from the old man as he weighed out the dust.

"I tell you what it is, boys," he said, gravely. "It don't do to bet on a sure thing in this world now, for sure things air sometimes mighty on-sartin."

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 152.)

"Yes, yes, she was poisoned. And she was poisoned by this beautiful belle here, whose name is Helene Cerey—eh, madame?"

The young man looked in astonishment toward Helene.

"Yes, Cortez; she was the rival of Florese. Florese must be removed, because Helene wanted her lover, Dwyer Allison. Oh, I know all about it! He! he! But she must have means and a tool. She first buys poison of me, and then finds a tool in Pedro Gomez, the gardener of Elsom Earncliffe, and the father of Wart Gomez. Ho! A nice plot, eh? A nice plot!"

"Yes. Malediction!" exclaimed Cortez, now grinning with his father.

"So, Florese was removed. Elsom Earncliffe could not survive the shock. Both father and daughter were removed. But, what did she do next? *Caramba!* What did she do with Pedro Gomez, her tool? She called him to her house to-night, drugged him, and then turned him over to some rascals who were to sting him with an asp—the asp, too, she got of me! *Hob-o!*"

"*Hob-o!*" echoed Cortez.

"Through the keyhole I saw her with Pedro."

"Curse him! I feared as much!" thought Helene, while she remained silent during the Quack's outburst.

"—For she had sent to me for a love-powder, and I had gone with the powder, unseen by the servants, to her private apartments. Malediction! what a plot!"

"Yes, Malediction! *Ha! ha! ha!*"

"She had written and signed an agreement to either marry Pedro Gomez, or give him half her fortune, after fifteen years. Through the keyhole I saw her place this paper in a small desk, when she turned poor Pedro over to the ruffians. And now I have got the paper! And she says it is of no use to me! *Ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!*"

Old Carlos bent his slim form nearly double, and laughed in his glee, till his sides were sore and aching.

"I think I see what you are driving at, old man."

"So do I," Helene thought to herself, while a peculiar, contemptuous smile played about her red lips.

"You see, Cortez, my boy?—*ho! ho! ho!*—you see? I have the written agreement of Helene Cerey, to marry, after fifteen years—not Pedro Gomez, but Cortez Mendoza! for we can easily erase the name, and insert a new one. *Caramba!* *Caramba!* how good."

"Yes—*caramba!*—it is very good," laughed the son.

The young Spaniard was already in love with the face before him, and at prospect of marrying one so beautiful, his whole passionate nature was aroused.

"You mean, then, Carlos Mendoza, that I am to marry your son?" the question was put very calmly, the speaker was not at all disconcerted.

"That is it! That is it!"

"And if I refuse—"

"If you refuse? Malediction! I will expose all your tricks!"

"I am not afraid of that," was Helene's mental comment. "Carlos Mendoza can not betray me, without implicating himself, and he will suffer equally with me, in the event of the exposure he threatens. He thinks I will not see this. I might astonish him by telling him how easy it would be for me to bring the officers of the law to his house, in search of the abductor and murderer of Caroline Mandoro. But, it would not be sensible for me to do that now, while I am locked in this room, and in their power. I must, first, get out of this. Let them go on. When they measure weapons with Helene Cerey, they will have to fight hard and shrewdly." Then aloud:

"Very well, Carlos Mendoza; you have me in your power, so I must yield."

"She is a magnificent woman! I love her wildly!" Cortez was saying, inwardly.

"It is well! It is well!" laughed the Quack.

"Cortez will make you a good husband. Now, do you not think this paper is worth something to me? Salute your sweetheart, Cortez! Kiss her! *Ho! ho! ho!*"

"Keep off!" ordered Helene, as the young man advanced with the apparent intention of kissing her. "Let it suffice, for the present, that I yield to your demands. Cortez will have embraces and kisses enough when we are married," and as she spoke—while her bosom was tumbling and burning with rage, hate, chagrin, contempt—she even smiled pleasantly on the young Spaniard.

"I will wait," said Cortez, bowing.

Then was time. Cortez was bowing so that he could not see her; old Carlos was unlocking the door; and, unobserved, she snatched up the box containing the Star of Diamonds, and thrust it out of sight in the folds of her dress.

"There you are!" whined Mendoza, *sen*.

"Your captivity is over. You are wise. You are politic. Cortez will make you a good husband. So, it is understood, eh? You are the betrothed of my son Cortez."

"He is a handsome man," Helene said, smiling, and turning her lustrous eyes toward him; "I have no doubt we shall get along happily. Moreover, I have no alternative—"

"None!" declared the Quack, chuckling anew.

"Therefore, we understand each other. And may I go, now?"

"Oh, yes—go! He! he! he! There's the door wide for you."

"Stay," interposed Cortez. "May I call upon you, to-morrow evening, Helene Cerey?"

"Certainly. I will be glad to see you, Cortez."

"But, he must not drink any wine, nor eat any fruit, nor smell of roses in your house! *Caramba!*" put in Carlos, meaningly.

"I shall expect you, Cortez."

"I will come."

He bowed gallantly as she swept past him; and when she was gone, he turned to old Carlos, with:

"Malediction! I am mad with love for her!"

"Oh! did I not say I had a pretty sweetheart in store for you?"

"*Caramba!* how beautiful!"

"Yes—yes; and a prize! This rival of Florese Earncliffe—with thousands and thousands of dollars, and so beautiful—*ho! ho!* what a prize!"

"Yes, a prize—What alls you, old man?"

Carlos had uttered a sudden cry.

"The box! The box! She has stolen it! Oh! oh! my beautiful diamonds!"

"Malediction!"

Carlos would have dashed after her. But Cortez detained him.

"No. Let her keep the accursed thing. It would only bring us ill luck."

"But the diamonds! the diamonds!" he howled, moving his slim body up and down in the other's hold, and gesticulating wildly.

"Let them go!"

"They are worth thousands!"

"I care not if they are worth millions—that would not save us from its fates. Let it go, I say."

"But I wanted it for you, Cortez! The money it would bring!—think of that."

"Devil's duca's!" grunted Cortez. "I want none of it. Besides, we can stipulate for it in that document you spoke of. What matter after all? It will eventually come back, when I

marry the pretty thief. Do you think she will wed me, old man?" the question thoughtfully.

"*Caramba!* of course she will. She can not refuse."

"True. We have her in a tight trap."

"Come now, we'll fix the paper, since she has escaped by this time with the star."

Mendoza drew forth the document which he had stolen from the small desk at Helene Cerey's house, and spread it on the table.

And while the Quack proceeded to arrange for the erasure, of Pedro's name, Cortez busied himself with glancing over the agreement that was to give him Helene Cerey for a wife.

"Malediction!" he exclaimed, in an undertone. "I will not wait fifteen years—nor fifteen months! She shall marry me at once! *Ho, there, Frank!*"

He rang the bell, and ordered the negro to bring a fresh bottle from the wine-closet; after which he seated himself to think—no more of Caroline Mandoro, and his fears—but of his new prospects and the enchanting girl who, he resolved, should be his wife within a month.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE CLAWS OF THE BEAUTIFUL TIGRESS.

We go again to the tapestried room at Helene Cerey's residence, in the early evening of the day following her visit to the Quack.

At the moment, the beauty was near the center of the apartment, facing a servant who was standing in the doorway. In one hand she held a card.

When she read the name, she glanced up, and said:

"Admit him. Usher him to this room."

"Yes, my lady."

The man thought it singular that his mistress should make it a point, of late, to receive visitors in her private apartments; for the tapestried room was certainly private, by her own orders. Only Ola, her maid, knew that she frequently enjoyed a cigarette in here, where there was no fear of intrusion, and hence no possibility of her habit becoming known. Not that she was afraid to have the fact of her indulgence leak out; for there were many women in her circle who enjoyed the vice of smoking; but because she chose, rather, to keep her doings covered.

Moreover, this was the same servant who had seen Pedro Gomez enter there the night before; and he wondered when that visitor—whoever he was—had gone out—if he had gone out at all, and if he had not gone out, then what had become of him? But, for reasons, he kept his wonderment to himself. He knew that if he evinced a desire to probe the affairs of his mistress, he would be immediately discharged; and no one in Helene Cerey's employ would wish to leave her, as she always dealt kindly with her servants and paid them liberally.

In a few moments the visitor was ushered in, and this visitor was Cortez Mendoza, the son of the Quack.

Helene had been expecting him.

A luxuriant sofa—or, rather, a long ottoman—had been pushed forward, and beside it stood the small mosaic table, containing fruit and wine.

Helene smiled pleasantly as he entered. She had dressed richly to receive him.

Cortez looked exceedingly handsome. She almost felt a passion for the young man, as she met the deep glance of his brilliant eyes; and while she gave him her hand in greeting, and led him to the ottoman-sofa, she thought:

"What a comely lover for some gay senorita! I am half in love with his handsome face myself."

And Cortez, as he feasted his eyes on her beauty:

"Malediction! What a lovely creature! Wait fifteen years for this prize? *Caramba!* No! I'll marry her within a month."

"Be seated, Cortez. I have been lonesome while waiting for my fiancé. But I feel better now. Here is wine. Let us drink and be merry."

"*Caramba!*" he thought. "She begins early. The old man warned me not to drink in her house, nor eat of any thing, nor smell of roses. And aloud: 'Thanks—but you will pardon my refusal.'"

"I see," said Helene, very unconcernedly, "you have been advised by your father not to touch any thing I may offer you. Have no fears, Cortez; I mean you no harm. How could I?—the man I have consented to marry! See!" and she drained a wine-glass as she spoke.

"Malediction!" mentally. "If that is drug, or poisoned, she has a dose of it, too. So I will try some—drink only when she drinks, and be on my guard."

Cortez drank.

"Now," said he, "to begin with you have stolen something from us, Helene Cerey."

"I?"

"Oh, you know—that Star of Diamonds."

"*Ha! ha! ha!* Yes, Cortez, I have stolen it. And I wish you to let me keep it for awhile. It is very pretty."

"Malediction! You may keep it for fifteen years, if you wish, but after fifteen years, you shall either marry Cortez Mendoza, or give him half your fortune, or restore the Star of Diamonds."

He drew the document from his pocket, and held it up before her—held it warily beyond her reach, however. And when she had glanced at it, and seen how cleverly the father and son had altered it to suit their purpose, he put it away again, with an air of satisfaction.

"But I do not propose to wait so long," he declared, with a nod and a smile.

"What did you say, Cortez?" Helene was idly picking at the fruit.

"I say I read not wait for fifteen years. Malediction! you are too beautiful to wait for! I must have you at once. I care nothing for your money; and as for the star—I would not have the accursed jewel if you were to give it to me this minute."

"Why not, Cortez?" she inquired, surprised at this declaration and its earnestness.

"That star was once the property of your grandfather."

"Of my grandfather?"

"Yes. It is a fatal possession. It has a history of evil, and I want none of it."

"Will you explain, Cortez?" asked Helene, in genuine astonishment.

Cortez Mendoza then narrated the history of the Star of Diamonds, though with fewer words than Caroline had used when she made the revelation to her husband, Wart Gomez, on the night of the latter's assassination.

"So you see," he added, in conclusion, "I want nothing to do with it. I am unlucky enough so far, until I met you; now I am lucky Cortez Mendoza."

"Yes, you are very lucky, Cortez."

"I do not want the star; I do not want your money, so you must marry me."

"Of course. That is understood. That is a very singular story you have been telling me, Cortez," eating leisurely of the fruit.

"You must be my wife within a month," he pursued.

"Within a month, Cortez?"

"That is what I said."

"But you are sudden—"

"No matter."

"I can not prepare in that time. My trousers!"

"Both the trousers! Malediction! I will attend to that very quickly!"

"And you will not wait longer?"

"No longer than a month. Malediction! You do not know how beautiful you are, else you would not wonder at my haste."

"*Ha! ha! ha! ha!* And you are determined?"

"Yes, determined."

"*Ha! ha! ha! ha!* I do not think you will marry me in a month, Cortez."

"You do not!—why?" He spoke sharply and glanced at her keenly, for there was a peculiar strain to her words, to her laugh, which grated on his ears.

"I do not think you will marry me at all, Cortez Mendoza. Helene Cerey is not for you."

With the cry she made a sudden movement, grasping him by the collar, and turned him completely over. Quick as a flash her white hands closed round his throat, and with one knee planted on his breast she held him down.

"*It is time! It is time!*" she screamed.

"Malediction!" snorted the Spaniard, struggling and straining every muscle to release himself—in vain.

Her action was so sudden as to take him utterly by surprise and at a disadvantage; and there must have been a marvelous strength in her smoothly-rounded arms, for she held him firmly, despite his frantic writhing, while she cried out:

"*It is time! It is time!*"

The words were a signal.

From the secret room issued forth the same wolf-visaged men who had made off with Pedro Gomez.

"Take him off! Off with him!" ordered Helene.

But they were startled by a rapid knocking at the door.

For a second the men paused, and Helene relaxed the tightness of her grip.

"*Caramba!*" roared Cortez.

With one mighty effort he shook her off, and darted toward the secret door.

"After him! He will escape after all!"

The ruffians dashed forward.

But Cortez saw the trap that had been set for him. Remembering certain impressive warnings he had received from his father, before visiting the belle, and perceiving the tools that had been in waiting for the signal, he feared—and reasonably—for his life.

With the cursing, growling men at his heels, he bounded across the dark room that was beyond the drapery.

At the window, he swung himself out. To his surprise and delight, he brushed against a rope ladder that was fastened to the sill, and by which means these ruffians were accustomed to gain ingress. Down this ladder he went in a twinkling. In a few seconds he was scaling the garden wall.

"Malediction!" he exclaimed, as he stretched his legs in a swift run, gave one glance back at the window, and fled, hatless, through the streets.

But the ruffians did not pursue him beyond the garden wall.

When Helene Cerey opened the door, to see who was there, another card was handed to her.

"Dwyer Allison," she read, then said, "I will be down presently. Show him into the salon at the back."

"Yes, my lady."

The servant departed with mouth agape. He had glanced into the tapestried room, and saw no sign of the visitor he had ushered in there a short time before!

## CHAPTER XVI.

HELENE CEREY'S LOVE.

THE note dispatched to Dwyer Allison, on the day previous, had brought the young man this evening to the house of Helene Cerey.

He was leaning against the mantelpiece, gazing absently down at the "charms" on his watch-chain, with which he toyed while awaiting her.

His handsome face was very pale and sad; it was evident that the loss of Florese, on the eve of her wedding, had been to him a heart-blow.

Helene came in presently.

Her face wore its

## THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

There lived a fox once on a time,  
(There always have been foxes),  
A sly old fox in every thing,  
Who dealt in bonds and stockades,  
And bought and sold bright yellow gold,  
Had railway shares in Texas,  
Could lift the chickens from a roost,  
And quickly wring their necks.

One day this sly old fox was out,  
And passing farmer Mapes's,  
He saw upon a trellis high  
A bunch of splendid grapes.  
He paused, that fateful moment,  
His palate's tenderest fancy,  
He reached up on tiptoe, but they  
Hung far above his hands.

Said he, "How much for being short  
A man in life off loses,"  
And put his speck upon his nose  
To take some nearer views.  
He rolled his sleeves up, and says he,  
"Now, grapes, your good time comes,"  
And gathers up some stones and clubs,  
And at them last he throws.

But ah, those grapes still hang aloft,  
A miss makes every missile,  
And through a window very near  
He makes a large sick whistle.  
But still he will not give it up,  
Because those grapes he prizes,  
Their size bring water to his mouth,  
And tears into his eyes.

"Sure, 'Nothing venture nothing have,'  
I oft have heard the saying,  
So off his shoes he throws, and up  
The trellis fast he climbs.  
He gets the grapes, but his foot slips,  
In vain the vines he seizes,  
And down he tumbles to the ground,  
And fractures both his knees.

And when he comes to taste the grapes,  
Brown-checked as any Gipsy's,  
He finds that they are sour,  
And pucker up his lips.  
The moral of this story's plain  
To boys as well as men,  
Don't work too hard to get our grapes,  
'Twill save you from some shocks.

## Owl's Head.

## A REVOLUTIONARY STORY.

BY LAUNCE PONTZ.

"I SAY, sir, that gentlemen should go where their sympathies lead them, and not stay where they do, as traitors in the camp. I hope that I am understood."

"And I say, major, that the insinuation conveyed in your speech is a cowardly falsehood. I hope that I am understood."

Major Hargreaves turned very red, as he said:

"I understand, perfectly, Captain Norwood, and you shall understand, too, at six o'clock tomorrow morning, if you please. Major Schweitzer will act as my friend, sir. At least, there is no doubt of his loyalty to the king."

Young Norwood smiled sarcastically.

"Less than there is of his courage, I admit. As the challenged party, I have the right of choosing the place. I say the Neutral Ground beyond Harlem. I fancy the major will not care to go there. I shall go alone, and if you dare follow, we shall see whether my honor is not as good as yours, major."

"Be it so," said Hargreaves, stiffly. "I will meet you then."

He was turning away, this stiff and choleric major of grenadiers, when Norwood observed:

"For to-night, I presume, we can trust to each other's honor not to visit a certain party."

Major Hargreaves wheeled round, as red as fire.

"I make no promises, sir, but this: I intend to marry that lady if I can cure her rebel sympathies, and I intend to kill you. Good-day," and away went Hargreaves down the street toward the house of the well-known Whig sympathizer, Judge Van Tassel.

Norwood looked after him, with a smile.

"Go ahead, Pomposity," he muttered, "and see what Gerty says. If you have any easier work than I have, I'm surprised."

Bertram Norwood was the eldest of two brothers, and had clung to the fortunes of the king during the Revolutionary war. His younger brother, Clarence Norwood, had risen to the rank of colonel in the Continental forces, and both brothers, though espousing opposite causes, had never failed to meet with mutual love and confidence, during the short armistices and truces that occasionally intervened. Bertram Norwood held to his opinions, as much from pride and honor as conviction, and Clarence respected his brother's conscience. But the royal officers, in those declining days of British power, were jealous of the shadow of a leaning toward the "Rebels," and Bertram Norwood was exposed to continual bickerings with brother-officers on account of sneers at his supposed Whiggery.

He had borne this patiently from most men, but when Major Lloyd Hargreaves insinuated a sneer at his honor, he fired up, as we have seen, and the major challenged him. The true reason of this lay below the surface. Bertram had espoused the British cause, as much to be near Gertrude Van Tassel, whose father remained in New York, a secret Whig, an open "trimmer," to save his large landed property. Gerty was an ardent patriot, and a beautiful heiress; hence all the British officers were trying to convert her, and Hargreaves was the most successful in appearance of all. Bertram knew him for a dangerous rival, and the major was correspondingly jealous of Bertram. Hargreaves had taken it into his head that if he could get rid of handsome young Norwood, he could soon storm the citadel of Gerty's heart. Hence the quarrel that had blazed up so quickly.

Neither of the rivals was aware that, at the moment they separated, a young man of singular personal grace was sitting alone with Miss Van Tassel, her head resting on his breast, while he said:

"Let them come and let them go, dearest; you and I trust each other and love America. Bertie shall be saved, and Alice be happy. Trust me for that."

"Well, sir, you are here at last. I hope you like the place. Your rebel friends may be on us if we do not finish this business quickly. Perhaps you would not be sorry."

And Major Hargreaves settled his chin in his voluminous white cravat and stared fiercely at Bertram Norwood, as the latter rode up.

Norwood looked sternly at the major, as he answered:

"Your insinuation is an additional insult I do not deserve, sir. What my sympathies may be you know not, but no man can say my honor as an officer is other than stainless. We waste time. Let us begin."

He dismounted and drew his sword, and the major was equally ready. Both men hated each other bitterly and wasted no time in preliminaries, but attacked each other with deadly ferocity.

The place, in which they had met by appointment, was sufficiently dangerous to be very lonely. It was at the edge of that neutral ground, between New York and the patriot lines, where cowboys and skimmers alike roved in robber bands, and where neither party was safe. Therefore was it especially avoided by

honest folks, and a duel was likely to be unloved.

Hargreaves and Norwood were both good fencers, but the latter was far the youngest. The major belonged to the old school, wary and cautious, with a wrist of iron and the head of a General. Norwood, though quick and supple, was inferior in coolness to his veteran antagonist. The slender rapiers clashed, writhed and twisted in the air, as first one and then the other lunged out and parried.

The major, keeping cool and grim, and fencing close, gradually began to press back his youthful antagonist, and Bertram, with rage and despair in his heart, found himself giving way. Hoping to get a more favorable engagement, he suddenly sprung back, and, in so doing, tripped over a projecting root, and fell backward to the ground.

"Now I have you!" shouted Hargreaves, vindictively, and he rushed forward to stab the fallen man, whose sword had escaped his grasp.

Then Bertram Norwood had been a lost man in another moment. Hargreaves was above him, with his sword drawn back to deal the murderous blow, when a hand of iron caught the soldier by the throat, and the next moment the great glaring eyes of an owl fixed on his face, while the hooked beak and tufted horns of the creature's head passed before his vision.

Utterly astounded, the major became powerless to struggle for a moment, for the hand of a man was on his throat, a man of far superior strength, with the head of an owl. In that moment the weird stranger drew back a sword he carried and stabbed Hargreaves in the side.

The weapon broke off close to the hilt and dropped harmless to the ground, while Hargreaves gasped out:

"Mercy, if you're the devil! I'll never wear it again."

Not a word replied the man with the owl's head, but he thrust the Englishman back like a child, and, raising the hilt of his broken sword, dealt him but one blow on the skull, when Hargreaves dropped like a felled ox.

Bertram Norwood, unable to realize fully what had happened, was struggling to rise, when the hoot of an owl resounded through the wood, and the next moment there was a rush of feet around him.

He caught a glimpse of dark forms of men, all surmounted with owl's heads, and then a cloak was thrown over his head and he was borne away.



OWL'S HEAD—1.

## Antipathy.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

MAJOR CLEVE, alone on the waste of sands, was ruthlessly grinding pebbles and shells beneath his boot heels, and casting disturbed, impatient glances toward the little pier which ran at some distance out into the rippling green seawater.

A couple of figures sauntered there—a man and a woman—their outlines cut sharp against the horizon. Sharply defined, even to the cool sweep of the woman's dress, simple buff linen, with a touch of tropical brightness added in the scarlet silken scarf which she wore over her head, and trailing its long ends over one shoulder.

Cleve put his glass to his eye, and looked at them for perhaps a quarter of a minute.

"Stanleigh," he said, just as though the distance had been too great to distinguish the individual's identity with the naked eye, as if he had not known it since he saw the two meet out there upon the pier five minutes before.

"Stanleigh, poor fellow! I hope he's not on the way to make an absurd mistake of himself, like all the rest of them. It's nothing to me, of course, but—confound them all!—I'd like to see one sensible man in the lot."

"It seems to me," he continued, in impatient musing, "that an infatuation runs much the same course as an epidemic. Just now Ruth Challon is the rage, and until the disease subsides, the whole range of creation here will run mad about her. It doesn't make an atom of difference that she's heartless and unemotional, deep and designing, too. All the community, from Renholme himself down to the raggedurchins in the fishermen's cottages, unite to do her reverence. On my word, I believe I'm the only one proof against her, since even Stanleigh rushes headlong on the road to get his wings singed. Diaboli! What a power the woman possesses, and in what a sublimely unconscious manner she carries herself."

He turned sharp about, and fell to pacing the sands again as the two figures advanced slowly along the pier. Miss Challon paused, and with a wave of dismissal to her companion, stood still looking down at the quiet ripple of the smoothly flowing tide. Stanleigh lounged idly about the sands and brought up at last by Cleve's side.

The latter missed something of the usual bright joyousness from his friend's manner; caught something of the trembling, wavering shade, half hopeful, half fearful, that seemed intangibly to pervade the atmosphere about him.

"Any thing amiss, Jack?" he asked, almost wistfully, as he fumbled in his cigar-case and passed it to the other.

"Nothing; no, oh no," returned Jack, with eager asseveration, which assured the major beyond doubt that something *was* amiss. He pulled his jetty whiskers and glowered sternly upon Stanleigh, until the latter, coloring and nervous, in spite of himself, felt obliged to retort in self-defense:

"In the name of all the wonders, man, what do you mean to express in that stare of yours? If you have any thing on your mind out with it, and give me at least the benefit of an impartial judgment."

Thus urged, Cleve sighed and shook his head dolefully, but averted his gaze from his disconcerted friend.

"Jack, my boy," he said, presently, "I'm afraid you're beyond help!"

"If you mean—" began Jack, impetuously, but Cleve stopped him with a gesture.

"Yes, that's what I mean," he returned, positively. "Just now I was comparing infatuations with epidemics, and you've got one, my boy, got it bad! I know all you can say about the 'disease privilege,' your being content to 'brave your fate,' and all that, which only goes to show how desperate your case is. I'll do any thing I can for you, depend on that. I wish you'd tell me just where you stand."

Jack Stanleigh whistled a bar from an opera, reflectively, and then burst out in his own impetuous manner.

"I say, Cleve, I know you're a trump at heart, though you are such a cynic on the outside. The truth is I've been making a confounded jackanapes of myself. Got jealous, you see, went off in a tiff, and stirred up a deuce of a fuss generally. Well, after a time I got it through my cranium that it was just possible I might have been mistaken; anyway I concluded not to bear the punishment I took upon myself without being sure I deserved it. So I packed up and came back in a truly repentant frame of mind, and there's where the matter stands, except—well, I'll let you know when you congratulate me, Cleve."

The major grasped the case, and knew how worse than useless remonstrance would prove. Jack's tongue, once loosed, rattled on.

"You know what a lady-killer Renholme is, so you see it was rather natural—my jealousy of him. And if the truth must be told, she—she really did—"

"She flirted too," broke in Cleve, remorselessly.

"Yes, but then I know I was an ogre."

"Just so," asserted the major, without any very definite idea of the manner in which Jack's ogreish proclivities might have manifested themselves. He said no more, but wrung his friend's hand in token of his sympathy; and after the other had gone, remained wandering about the sands, smoking furiously, and plung-

content to sustain amicable relations. Just he kind enough to take charge of Cleve there, will you?"

But Cleve bowed himself out of the field, though not so far but he could keep watch of the secluded corner and what passed there.

Miss Challon fenced herself in by a dextrous turn of the buhl table, and on this occasion she fenced Renholme in also; he remained there through the evening, by no means an unwilling captive. Stanleigh sauntered in and consoled himself as best he might in the light of Miss Fanny's favor, until Cleve, stalking discontentedly about, retired after an hour or two.

Every day the crystal bowl on the little buhl table brightened with a fresh offering; sometimes sweet-breathed pansies nestling in beds of glossy myrtle; sometimes a waxen camelia, or a vivid cluster of carnations, or old-fashioned spice-pinks; but oftentimes the mosses and grasses of the marsh and the sea; and, of all, these were the ones which Miss Challon liked best. Yet, try as she would, she could not discover the donor.

Cleve was much disturbed in his mind during this time. Miss Challon was kind to Jack Stanleigh as she was to all, but the major could detect no basis for the foundation for such exultant hope as his friend appeared to entertain.

On one occasion, when he attempted to reason with the misguided Jack, he found himself the recipient of such a medley of confidences and assurances that all was coming speedily right, that he beat an incontinent retreat, determined to leave the headstrong Jack to the fate he courted.

He thought better of it afterward, and resolved to make an appeal to Miss Challon's better nature, with the mental reservation, "provided she possesses such a phase."

He approached his subject awkwardly enough, and blundered through it, conveying such a sense of wrong done to Jack and bitterness toward herself, that Miss Challon may be pardoned for feeling resentful.

Would it not be more generous, he asked her, to spare true-hearted men and confine her operations to such legitimate prey as the class represented by Renholme, whom no one would credit with enough sensibility, outside of himself, to suffer severely from any pangs of wounded affection?

Miss Challon would not apply the question to herself, would not understand the nature of

dering that he walked two miles over the marshes, and returned with his hands full of the delicate mosses which were wont to grace the crystal bowl on the tiny buhl table.

Some fate—a kindly one—had led Miss Challon out that way, and so they came suddenly face to face again in the narrow, soggy, reed-fringed marsh path. Her face flushed with a quick glow as she beheld his burden.

"It was you, after all," she said, half-reproachfully. "I ought to be angry, but I'd rather thank you."

"Then let us be antipathies no more," he said, pleadingly, letting his whole mass of mosses fall in his eagerness to grasp the fair hand she extended in token of amnesty.

So there the antipathy ended, though I'm inclined to believe—let me whisper softly—that it had no real existence from the beginning.

## Beat Time's Notes.

SKIMPS has invented a patent arm so perfect that people are asking to cutting their old arms off for the purpose of wearing them. They never get the rheumatism in the elbow. The fingers don't freeze, or get broken in shaking hands with earnest friends. You can readily write with them both prose and poetry—especially poetry. They are more service to you than a hired hand, and they will go out and saw your wood while you remain in the house. Some men who do a great deal of work wear eight or ten of these patent arms. Skimps is at work now on a new patent head, which, for durability and soundness, has never before been equaled.

How to catch a flea. Don't be in a hurry and get frantic. Watch your chances. Take a two-foot rule, and measure the distance from your hand to the flea. Take your pencil and calculate the time it will take to pass your hand that distance so you may be sure. Take a long breath. Aim to grab his hind-leg. Nerve yourself up, take a drink, make a ferocious grab, and, if the flea strays off, continue the chase around the room until you tumble over the baby; then flee!

OPEN the shell of the oyster carefully lest the oyster escapes and runs off; grab him by the neck and cut his head off; clip his wings very close; cut off his legs; remove his feathers; make him sour and morose with vinegar; pepper him with pepper, and then eat him for his mother, but, in any case, first remove the shell before you eat him.

How delightful is the first advent of spring, when the early cockroaches begin to blossom and the tender toads begin to spring up, and delicious insects begin to grow, and snakes burst out of the ground, and mosquitoes begin to take off their comforts and overcoats! I say how delightful! isn't it, or is it not, or why not?

THESE earthquakes running around loose ought to be trapped, or somebody ought to give them a good shaking; or, when they open their mouths to swallow a city, run a pitchfork down their throats. They are a very undermining set and ought to be buried.

WHEN the tired day declines upon her evening couch, and the enameled moon walks in beauty through night, and sheds her soft and silvery radiance over hill and dale and slumbering grove, bathing all nature in its tender light, it is a good time to hunt 'possums and 'coons.

How often in some still evening hour, while we pause to reflect upon the old delights of the days gone by, have we felt a thrill of regret steal over our spirits, sad and mournful, to think how much pleasure we lost by not kicking the fellow who once stepped on our corn.

TWO boys sat on the bank fishing—the old story, ran off from school—when, suddenly, one of them said: "Bill, I've got an awful bite." But, the fish getting off the hook, he exclaimed again: "There, he's unbite!"

RICHES are a nuisance. I have done all I could not to get rich—worked harder to prevent it than at any thing else. I have been successful. Unflinching energy will always succeed. I deserve more credit than I get.

WHEN the captain of a certain sailing ship runs a race with another craft he always goes aft and swears. His oaths are of such force and power they increase the wind and are better than a gale.

"Ah," said the sentimental Jones, "how I should dread to lie in the cold, cold grave." "You need not dread that," said his friend; "it's warm enough after you die."

A HUSBAND, whose wife asked him why he kept such late hours, replied that the Scriptures enjoined us to save all the time we can, and he didn't want to let even the late hours go.

A CONGRESSMAN being called upon to apologize for words spoken in debate, did so by saying he was a little hard of hearing and didn't understand what he did say.

A MAN out West has such sharp eyes that he shaves himself with them every morning, and they are so piercing that he opens bolts with them. He sharpens them on a razor-strop.

WHEN you are invited to "make yourself at home," be sure that they don't want you to make yourself at home in the other sense of the phrase.

I WOULDN'T give a cent in small bills for a young man when he begins to think there is only one woman in the world.

If a man should start round peddling new and splendid minds, he would not make a sale in a year. We are all well enough satisfied.

WHEN Wilkins came home from church, he said the congregation took all the nap off the sermon by going to sleep.

By the late postal law a regular letter having only a one-cent stamp on it will only be carried one-third of the way.

GIVE an ear to good counsel. I know some people who will take every thing they can reach, except advice and pills.

A MERCHANT may praise a poor article—but you can always rely on the sheriff's warrant.

WHATEVER wrong is done you, consider the sorcs.

WHY is it that some toppers manage to hold their heads so long above water?

It is wrong to put a glass of beer down and then ask the landlord to put it down, too.

THE new measure of Ireland—Penian Leagues.